Chronicles

October 2007

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

$3.95

Celebrity POLITICS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Rockford Institute's Third Winter School • January 2-9, 2008

"The Rise of Rome"

Faculty

Chronicles editors **Thomas Fleming** and **Scott P. Richer**
Rockford Institute vice president **Christopher Check**,
Gail Fleming, and special guest **Dr. James Patrick**,
chancellor of the College of Saint Thomas More

Drawing on readings from Livy, Plautus, Terence, Cato, and Plutarch, students will discover why the Founding Fathers of the American Republic chose the Roman Republic as their model. Lectures will include discussions of Rome's influence on the Anglo-American republican tradition; classical architecture and its legacy; the army that stopped Hannibal; the Roman family; and Cato the Elder and the crisis of the Roman Republic.

Daily guided walks will introduce students to the Eternal City's great churches, museums, and archeological sites. Special events include an excursion to Ostia Antica and a lunch at Cipriani.

Ample arrangements for private sightseeing and shopping!

Seven nights' lodging † Breakfast & dinner † Lectures † Discussions † Walking tours † Museum and archeological sites † Scholarships available for full-time students

Double-occupancy, shared-bath lodging at the Centre Diffusione Spiritualità, a charming and well-kept convent located on a quiet street in Trastevere, convenient to both the Vatican and Rome's Centro Storico

Early Bird Rate: $1,195.00 (per person, double occupancy) § All prices increase by $200 after October 15, 20

A limited number of single rooms are available. Call for rates. Registration fees are based on current exchange rates; the Institute reserves the right to assess a fee, should rates change significantly at the dollar's expense.

For more information or to register, contact Christopher Check, executive vice president, at (815) 964-5811 or visit *www.RockfordInstitute.org/events*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Chronicles

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

PERSPECTIVE

"Make Me Do Right or Make Me Do Wrong, I'm Your Puppet" by Thomas Fleming 10

A firsthand account.

VIEWS

Pop Culture and Politics 14
by Christopher Sandford
Passing by the train wreck.

From Wellstone to Franken 17
by Ron Kyser
The era of Gopher goofiness.

GOP Country 20
by Jack Trotter
A troubled marriage.

In Film, the Political Is the Personal 23
by George McCartney
Time for your close-up.

NEWS

Unification Issues in Asia 27
by Edward A. Olsen
Rethinking U.S. policy.

REVIEWS

Hitchens' Hubris 29
by Tom Piatak

Christopher Hitchens: *god Is Not Great: How Religion Spoils Everything*

David Middleton on Anthony Esolen's 33
Ironies of Faith: The Laughter at the Heart of Christian Literature ◆ **Christie Davies** on Paul Lewis's *Cracking Up: American Humor in a Time of Conflict* ◆ **Mark Tooley** on Michael Kazin's *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan*

CORRESPONDENCE

Letter to Mitt Romney: Imagination Deficit 40
by Jack Trotter

Letter From Punxsutawney: The Slavic League 41
by Greg Kaza

Letter From New York City: Living Communally 42
by Jerry Salyer

VITAL SIGNS

CHRISTIANITY: **Some Thoughts on *Motu Proprio* Mania** 47
by Mark Shea

TRADE: **Free Trade and the Sacrificialists** 48
by Larry Eubank

THE SERVILE STATE: **On the Lam From the Census Bureau** by Doug Bandow 51

COLUMNS

SINS OF OMISSION by Roger D. McGrath 13

BREAKING GLASS by Philip Jenkins 37

THE ROCKFORD FILES 38
by Scott P. Richert

EUROPEAN DIARY 44
by Andrei Navrozov

THE AMERICAN INTEREST 45
by Srdja Trifkovic

IN THE DARK 54
No End in Sight*, *The Bourne Ultimatum*, *The Simpsons Movie by George McCartney

THE HUNDREDTH MERIDIAN 56
by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

DEPARTMENTS

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES 4

AMERICAN PROSCENIUM 6

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS 7

POETRY
A Field of Peonies and 12
Why the Vikings Rejected America by John Nixon, Jr. 26

ON THE COVER

Cover by George McCartney, Jr.
Inside illustrations by Melanie Anderson.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EDITOR
Thomas Fleming

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Scott P. Richert

SENIOR EDITOR, BOOKS
Chilton Williamson, Jr.

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Aaron D. Wolf

DESIGNER
Melanie Anderson

INTERIOR ARTIST
George McCartney, Jr.

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Katherine Dalton, George Garrett, Tom Landess, Joseph Sobran, James O. Tate, Clyde Wilson

CORRESPONDING EDITORS
Wayne Allensworth, Donald Livingston, Roger D. McGrath, William Mills, William Murchison, Claude Polin

EUROPEAN EDITOR
Andrei Navrozov

FILM EDITOR
George McCartney

FOREIGN-AFFAIRS EDITOR
Srdja Trifkovic

LEGAL-AFFAIRS EDITOR
Stephen B. Presser

POETRY EDITOR
Catharine Savage Brosman

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Cindy Link

PUBLISHER
The Rockford Institute

A publication of The Rockford Institute.
Editorial and Advertising Offices:
928 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103.
Website: *www.chroniclesmagazine.org*
Editorial Phone: (815) 964-5054.
Advertising Phone: (815) 964-5813.
Subscription Department: P.O. Box 800,
Mount Morris, IL 61054. Call 1-800-877-5459.

Copyright © 2007 by The Rockford Institute.
All rights reserved.

Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture (ISSN 0887-5731) is published monthly for $39.99 (foreign subscriptions add $12 for surface delivery, $48 for Air Mail) per year by The Rockford Institute, 928 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103-7061. Preferred periodical postage paid at Rockford, IL and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Chronicles, P.O. Box 800, Mount Morris, IL 61054.

The views expressed in *Chronicles* are the authors' alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Rockford Institute or of its directors. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE
Vol. 31, No. 10 October 2007
Printed in the United States of America

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On Saving Social Security

If I read Doug Bandow's "Social Security's War on Families" correctly (*Views*, August), the high-end projection of the cost of Social Security and Medicare would be $50 trillion. If privatization of Social Security is accomplished, we could expect a $20-trillion decrease over the next 75 years. This is using high-end figures, which generally become lower-end. Am I correct that this still leaves Social Security in a $30-trillion deficit 75 years down the road?

The Democrats' solution to Social Security is to have Social Security taxes applied to 100 percent of taxpayers' salaries and to add a Social Security tax to dividends and capital gains. Does Mr. Bandow have any figures on how much money this would raise? The other possibility is a one-time tax on all wealth. As Mr. Bandow stated in his article, "all wealth" amounts to only $35 trillion. So, if they took it all, they still would not be able to bail out Social Security.

—Larry J. Hall
Elizabethtown, KY

Mr. Bandow Replies:

Subjecting all income to Social Security taxes, like most other tax-hike proposals, would not close the fiscal gap. The best hope for salvaging America's fiscal future is through a system of privatization that reduces future payments to program recipients (who opted for private accounts) and, thus, ultimate Social Security outlays.

On the Banks That Benefit

I found Andrea Crandall's "Serbia in Our Own Image" (*Correspondence*, July) very informative. Her article brings to mind two subsidiary points.

Why has the U.S. bombing in Iraq destroyed much of the infrastructure of the country? This, to me, seemed unnecessary if the aim of the war was merely to defeat the enemy. Applying Miss Crandall's analysis of Serbia to Iraq, one could interpret it to mean that our bombing was designed to make it possible to hand out tax-guaranteed loans to favored banks in order to rebuild or buy up the infrastructure that we had destroyed—and, incidentally, to enable them to buy up any remaining competition in order to control the country's politics. Miss Crandall does mention that Larry Summers and Paul Wolfowitz were involved.

Is Iraq a repeat of the disastrous "privatization" in Russia that permitted the oligarchs to gain control of much of Russian industry and infrastructure? Apparently, privatization and modernization are covers for tax-guaranteed loans so that international financiers can use taxpayer dollars to buy up a country's infrastructure and thereby control a new order.

—Monty Baltas
Alexandria, VA

Miss Crandall Replies:

One purpose of destroying Iraqi infrastructure was to profit from rebuilding it. (Cheney/Haliburton and Senator Feinstein's URS Corp. and Perini Corp. contracts spring to mind.) Financial interests would also like to rebuild Iraqi infrastructure in a way that is more politically appealing to themselves. Iraq is one link in the chain between Caspian oil and Israel's ports at Eilat and Ashkelon. The new Iraqi pipe systems will route oil through "America's Ally in the Middle East."

A handful of cronies will end up owning Iraq, much like the oligarchs own Russia. And, of course, these oligarchs will be sympathetic toward the international financial elite.

Mr. Baltas has touched on a very important point: "Privatization," "modernization," and globalism are tools of control through debt. It is no coincidence that organizations pushing globalization, such as the Trilateral Commission or the Council on Foreign Relations, are closely connected to international banking. Economic control is political control, and a "new order" is just what they are planning for us.

On Rediscovering Identity

Sean Scallon's "Letter From Quebec: Talking About Culture" (*Correspon-*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dence, July) is an excellent report on the recent provincial elections in Quebec. As explained by Mr. Scallon, the ADQ has attempted to reintroduce the question of Quebec culture into the political arena. This emphasis on cultural identity by M. Dumount and the ADQ raises a generally ignored but highly important fact about politics in Quebec.

The Québécois can never reestablish true cultural identity without countering the Quiet Revolution of the 50's and 60's. This social revolution in essence destroyed the underlying threads of the identity of the Québécois (and their French Acadian cousins in the Maritimes). This goose that laid the cultural golden egg was, first and foremost, Catholicism and, second, the rural base of the Catholic population in Quebec.

M. Dumont, too young to have known Catholic Quebec, has inherited a Quebec that has killed this goose and, like the rest of deracinated North America, is reaping the results of cultural disintegration. His attempt to reinstate a Quebec culture is much like the blind leading the blind. M. Dumont is only able to offer the old liberal-socialist soft nationalism of René Lévesque of the 70's, with a little free-market theory thrown into the mix. The Québécois identity that emerged in the 60's and 70's with Lévesque and Trudeau had energy, confidence, and a sense of the future. This cultural vitality, the sort that M. Dumont hopes the Québécois will rediscover, existed not because its modernist, liberal, state-capitalist foundation was a solid one upon which to build a separate Quebec nation, but simply because all revolutions and revolutionaries, quiet or otherwise, have their day of enthusiasm in building their new order—in their case, the new liberal order that inevitably led to the cultural nihilism that Quebec presently experiences.

M. Dumont and the ADQ can be credited for publicly recognizing that Quebec once had an identity and is now having an identity crisis. Until he and his younger generation of Québécois admit that Quebec's identity was rooted in Catholicism, however, there will be no success in stemming the cultural destruction of liberalism and multiculturalism. This is unlikely to happen, and Quebec, with the lowest birthrate in North America, is unlikely to remain the home of a distinct people once known as French Canadians.

—Gary Arnett
Carleton, Nova Scotia

Mr. Scallon Replies:

I agree with Mr. Arnett that a rebirth and restoration of the Catholic Faith would go a long way to strengthen the Québécois identity. The problem is that M. Dumont can only work with the tools he has available to him. And if tomorrow he declared that an ADQ government would encourage people to go to church and have more children, he would be laughed off the political stage, even getting guffaws from members of his own party. There is a reason why he couches his rhetoric in the secular, liberal-socialist, soft nationalism of Lévesque rather than the hard-right Catholicism of Maurice Duplessis.

The nationalism of the Parti Québécois and the Bloc Québécois has been secular, emphasizing the primacy of the French language. That battle has largely been won. French is the dominant language of the province, and the old English elites of Montreal have, for the most part, been swept away. Such successes have basically robbed the nationalist parties of their main issues since the 1995 referendum, because nobody (besides a few diehards) really believes Quebec will ever be independent of Canada. Unfortunately, there are lots of places all over the world—from Haiti to the Central African Republic to Algeria—whose inhabitants speak French and would love to live in a prosperous Quebec. Negative reaction to such Third World immigration helped Dumont and the ADQ in the recent National Assembly elections.

Mr. Arnett brings up an interesting point about young political leaders such as Dumont. He's about my age, so he missed the 1960's and the Quiet Revolution. Thus, unlike his parent's generation, he doesn't reject the old symbols of Quebec nationalism, which were connected to the Catholic Church. That doesn't mean that he or the other Québécois of his generation are praying novenas, however. Generation X or Y may not be demanding Guitar Masses or female priests, but they aren't joining the Knights of Columbus, either. The Quiet Revolution wrested control of education and healthcare from the Church and minimized Her role in society. More problems followed, including scandals, a shortage of priests and nuns, and divisions within the Quebec Church over the catechism, resulting in low church attendance and making evangelization difficult. And even if a powerful evangelization movement among young Québécois were launched, it would run smack dab into a hostile culture that would threaten clergy with jail for following Church teachings, that values economic growth and "progressive" values (multiculturalism, tolerance), and that prefers sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. Dumont does not talk about religion because, in today's Quebec, there's nothing much to talk about.

We cannot recreate Maurice Duplessis' Quebec. But that doesn't mean that all is hopeless, as there are Quebeckers, such as Quebec City's Marc Cardinal Oullet, who are trying to regenerate Christian culture. Philip Jenkins has written extensively about independent groups in the West who are trying to revive the Faith—and are succeeding, now that the Church is seen as an institution under siege, instead of an oppressor. The return of the Latin Mass may draw in people who are looking for more substance in worship. And the generation that grew up with Pope John Paul II will provide more than its fair share of the faithful. But such revivals will be tempered by modernity and will have to walk a fine line between trying to create a new culture of the Faith and attempting to rebuild a past that cannot be rebuilt.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by Ted Galen Carpenter

Out of Iraq, Into Darfur?

In the fourth Democratic presidential debate (July 23), the candidates were united on the need for the United States to withdraw from Iraq. But most of them (with the notable exception of Bill Richardson) were equally convinced of the need to intervene in Darfur. Sen. Joe Biden was out front on that issue, arguing that the United States should take action whenever it can make a difference in humanitarian crises. We should intervene in Darfur, Biden intoned, "because we can." He proposed sending 2,500 American ground troops as part of a NATO mission. Although most of the other Democrats on the stage have not yet gone that far, they are on record as favoring at least U.S. logistical support and the establishment of a no-fly zone.

Such enthusiasm for intervention in Darfur suggests that the Democratic presidential candidates have learned little from the Iraq debacle. They are not against elective wars—interventions that have little or no connection to the security and well-being of the United States—as a matter of principle. Instead, they appear merely to be against *Republican* elective wars—especially those that go badly.

No one disputes that the situation in Darfur is an humanitarian tragedy. By most estimates, more than 200,000 civilians have perished in nearly a decade of civil strife. There is also little doubt that the Sudanese government and its janjaweed-militia allies are responsible for the bulk of the atrocities.

Nevertheless, it is not clear that outside military action is the solution to this horrid situation, much less that the United States should lead such an effort. It is dangerous folly to assume, as Biden does, that a U.S.-led intervention would be quick and easy. No one can predict whether an intervention in any country will be easy or difficult, relatively bloodless or extremely bloody. Let's remember that most supporters of the Iraq war in 2003 believed that the invasion and occupation would be, in the words of former Reagan administration official Kenneth Adelman, "a cakewalk." It has proved to be anything but that. More than 3,700 Americans have perished in the mission, and the financial costs to American taxpayers already exceed $450 billion.

True, some military ventures prove to be easier than anticipated. The 1991 Persian Gulf War claimed far fewer American lives than most experts had predicted. The United States and her NATO allies were able to conduct the Kosovo war entirely with airpower–bombing from 30,000 feet—and did not suffer a single fatality (although many Serb civilians were not so fortunate).

There are many more cases, though, in which the interventions turn out to be longer, bloodier, and more frustrating than anticipated. The Iraq mission certainly merits that label, as did the Vietnam War four decades earlier. In the latter case, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's prediction that all U.S. troops would be home by Christmas 1965 became a grim joke as the war dragged on for seven more years.

The interventions in Lebanon (1982-83) and Somalia (1992-93) also were cases in which rosy predictions turned to ashes. The Lebanon venture began as a limited mission to evacuate Palestinian fighters and end the brutal Israeli siege and bombardment of West Beirut. Soon, however, it escalated into an effort to pacify the ongoing Lebanese civil war–a campaign that put the United States on the side of the Christian-dominated government against various Muslim factions. That intervention culminated in the bombing of the Marine barracks and the deaths of 241 Marines.

The Somalia mission began even more innocently, as a purely humanitarian relief effort to prevent mass starvation in that country. However, it rapidly morphed into a nation-building crusade in the midst of a multisided civil war. The campaign collapsed after a firefight in Mogadishu between U.S. forces and the militia of warlord Mohammed Farah Aideed left 18 Army Rangers dead.

As in the cases of Lebanon, Somalia, and Iraq, Darfur might appear to be an easy intervention. Appearances, however, can be deceiving. America could find herself wandering into yet another Third World quagmire. Sending in ground forces is especially dangerous, but even establishing a no-fly zone and providing logistical support is not without risk. What might happen, for example, if a C-130 transport flying in equipment for international peacekeepers were shot down? One could readily anticipate that there would be calls to escalate Washington's commitment to teach the terrorists that they cannot attack U.S. forces with impunity.

Moreover, we have to consider the wider political and diplomatic ramifications of intervening in Darfur. If the United States leads a military venture there, it will be another case of a largely Christian nation invading and occupying part of a Muslim country. That would be the third such action in less than six years—following the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Americans might well have unassailably humanitarian motives for undertaking a Darfur mission, but that is not necessarily how it will be viewed in the Muslim world. The United States already has a bad reputation among Muslims; we ought to be very careful about doing something that might make matters even worse.

It is hard to stand by and watch the suffering in Darfur. But the United States should not be expected to be the world's rescue squad. There are more than 190 other countries in the international system, many of whom have far greater tangible interests at stake in Darfur than does America. Those countries include the nations in both northern and sub-Saharan Africa, the various Arab states outside North Africa, and even the countries of the European Union. If there is a serious military intervention, they should be expected to step forward long before the United States is called upon.

The U.S. government's primary fiduciary responsibility is to its own citizens. It is morally irresponsible to sacrifice American blood and treasure unless the security and well-being of the American people is directly at risk. We have needlessly wasted blood and treasure in Iraq for an elective war, and we should not make the same mistake in Darfur. Unfortunately, the foreign-policy slogan of the Democrats in the 2008 election seems to be "Out of Iraq, Into Darfur." c

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RON PAUL RISING

When the Old Gray Lady finally deigned to take notice of Ron Paul's presidential bid, it was in the form of a long piece in the *New York Times Magazine* by Christopher Caldwell, a piece that confirmed the definite feeling of déjà vu I get when I note the energy, the enthusiasm, and the surprising success (so far) of the Paul campaign. It is, to my mind, basically a remake of the Goldwater crusade that launched the modern conservative movement.

Back in 1964, the Goldwater campaign arose from its Western and Southern roots to take back the GOP from the Eastern Establishment and lay the basis for the conservative revival of the 1980's. The media—and, in those days, the phrase *liberal media* was a real redundancy—was relentlessly hostile to Goldwater and contemptuous of his followers, who were characterized as reactionary rubes and perhaps even closet Nazis, or at least bigots of a very unappetizing sort. In the liberal imagination, the alleged menace of the "Radical Right" was embodied by the John Birch Society.

Already the object of several hysterical reports by the Anti-Defamation League, the anti-"extremist" tag team of Arnold Foster and Benjamin R. Epstein, and the indefatigable Harry Overstreet, the Birchers were characterized as the secret power behind the Goldwater campaign. In the liberal imagination, the Goldwater movement supposedly represented an attempt by the "Radical Right" to goosestep into power and undo decades of "social progress." The propaganda blitz was aided and abetted by the future neoconservatives, who had yet to defect to the right and were still sounding the alarms against "the paranoid style in American politics," as Richard Hofstadter's famous essay characterized all dissent from orthodox New Deal liberalism.

This phrase "the paranoid style" comes up early in Caldwell's otherwise favorable profile of Ron Paul and his campaign. While the candidate's integrity, dedication to what are recognizably conservative politics, and obvious sincerity are all given their due, there is an unmistakable vein of disdain that runs through the piece, and the "mainstream" media began to pick up on it even before it went online. *Editor & Publisher* headlined its story "Ron Paul—President of the Wackos," a theme that showed up in Caldwell's focus on the Pasadena Ron Paul Meet-up group, which includes some members of the John Birch Society. When Caldwell raised the issue, Paul didn't budge: "'Oh, my goodness, the John Birch Society!' he said in mock horror. 'Is that bad? I have a lot of friends in the John Birch Society. They're generally well educated, and they understand the Constitution. I don't know how many positions they would have that I don't agree with. Because they're real strict constitutionalists, they don't like the war, they're hard-money people.'"

"Paul's ideological easygoingness," avers Caldwell, "is like a black hole that attracts the whole universe of individuals and groups who don't recognize themselves in the politics they see on TV." In Caldwell's view, that is not a Good Thing: To mix with such poltroons is to risk being "showered with privately printed newsletters full of exclamation points and capital letters."

The growing visibility and success of the Paul campaign is, for militant centrists such as Caldwell, a worrying sign. It represents a conspiracy of malcontents, of the left as well as the right, who may have irreconcilable differences, "But they have a lot of common beliefs too, and their numbers—and anger—are of a considerable magnitude. Ron Paul will not be the next president of the United States. But his candidacy gives us a good hint about the country the next president is going to have to knit back together."

The country is badly divided, because of the war and the depredations of the present administration, and Caldwell sees the Paul campaign as a barometer of the country's great distress. Ron Paul's candidacy is a political antibody, the natural reaction of a healthy (at least, to some degree) body politic as it tries to fight off an invasion of foreign germs.

The U.S. government itself—not just the GOP or the conservative movement—has been hijacked, and this is especially evident in our foreign policy, which is run by special interests and foreign lobbyists. Ron Paul understands who the hijackers are and what they want, and he is the only candidate who has taken on the widely hated neoconservatives: "There is abundant evidence exposing those who drive our foreign policy justifying preemptive war. Those who scheme are proud of the achievements in usurping control over foreign policy. These are the neoconservatives of recent fame. Granted, they are talented and achieved a political victory that all policymakers must admire. But can freedom and the republic survive this takeover? That question should concern us."

Indeed it does concern the regular readers of this magazine, who were troubled by the neocon takeover long before it became fashionable.

The gloom that is a large part of being a paleoconservative seems, for a moment, to be at least partially dispelled by Ron Paul's impressive success. He is successfully propelling the ideas many of us have been writing and speaking about for years to the center of the political stage, at least on the Republican side of the aisle. As of this writing, Paul has plenty of "buzz," and now we're going to see if it translates into votes. Patrick Ruffini, the RNC's former internet whiz, is predicting that Paul will take second place in the Iowa Caucuses; and his campaign has enough support nationwide to ensure that Ron will go all the way—in one form or another—to the ballot in the general election.

What Murray Rothbard used to call the Old Right is back, and the Paul campaign is its latest incarnation. Like the Buchanan Brigades before them, Paul's legions are committed to taking back their party, and their country, from those they regard as usurpers in every way. Unlike Buchanan, however, who faced a sitting incumbent Republican, Paul faces a badly divided field of major phonies and minor single-noters, such as Tom Tancredo. In addition, all the anointed frontrunners either married their cousins or belong to some weird frontier cult. For the moment, many are hailing Fred Thompson as the next Reagan, who can unite fractious conservatives on the basis of his acting skills. One has to wonder: Can someone who lobbied on behalf of the abortion industry really get the GOP presidential nomination?

At the end of his piece, Caldwell is quick to point out that "Ron Paul will not be the next president of the United States," but, hey, what's significant is that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it is no longer inconceivable that he will get the GOP nod. Defying the odds and the elites, Goldwater defeated the Eastern Establishment, vanquished Nelson Rockefeller and his minions, and launched the rebirth of conservatism in America. The Ron Paul Revolution aims to renew and complete that victory.

—*Justin Raimondo*

THE DAY OF CONCEPTION

In Russia's Ulyanovsk region, the birthplace of Lenin, the regional government has declared September 12 the "Day of Conception," throwing in a promise of time off work for couples striving to make that day a success. Such programs have been instituted more frequently since Russian President Vladimir Putin made boosting the country's birthrate part of his grand design of "national projects." Indeed, Putin has called the country's demographic collapse the most acute problem facing the nation and has announced a federal program aimed at increasing incentives for families to have more than one child. Under the federal program, women who give birth to two or more children are eligible for certificates valued at 250,000 rubles (about $10,000). These certificates can be used to pay for a child's education or for improving the family's housing and living conditions. The Russian government also raised child-support payments this year from 700 to 1,500 rubles (about $60) per month.

The combined problem of declining birthrates and horrific mortality rates has alarmed Russians for years. This trend started under communism, then accelerated following the collapse of the Soviet Union and, with it, Russia's economy and Soviet-era social-support system. Russia is now facing the prospect of her population falling below 100 million by 2050. (The latest census has the Russian population at about 141 million.) Meanwhile, the Kremlin watches as illegal immigrants from China slowly fill the vacuum left in vast tracts of sparsely inhabited Russian Federation territory, especially in Siberia, which abounds with natural resources. And the question of "migrants"—a term encompassing immigrants (both legal and illegal) mainly from the Caucasus and Central Asia—and their impact on the "core population" (read: "the population in mostly Slavic regions") has become a major political issue.

So it is no surprise that certain regional governors have attempted to demonstrate the serious nature of the issue by boosting their own government-sponsored programs to increase birthrates. Journalist Liza Kuznetsova has followed the Ulyanovsk program, reporting that the regional government's slogan "Give birth to a patriot" is part of Gov. Sergey Morozov's plan to produce a large brood of "patriots" who will appear nine months later, on Russia Day. The program has been under way in Ulyanovsk since 2005, and, according to Kuznetsova, the number of competitors (everyone involved wins something, including refrigerators and cash prizes, but the couple deemed the "fittest" parents win a grand prize) has increased each year, while the region has enjoyed something of a baby boom. Last year, 500 women signed up, and, nine months later, 78 babies were born—triple the region's daily average. Kuznetsova reports that the national anthem was played as the "patriotic" babies came into the world. The region's birthrate is up 4.5 percent this year over 2006, according to the regional administration.

This year's grand prize was a UAZ-Patriot—an SUV produced in the region. The happy winners were Irina and Andrey Kartuzov, who were awarded the prize because of their "respectability" and "commendable parenting" of their two other children. Aleksey Bezrukov and his wife, Yulia, won a substantial cash prize following the birth of their third child, Andrey. "It was a patriotic atmosphere, when everyone is celebrating, but I wasn't thinking of anything but my son," said Aleksey. "The whole thing is great, it's great to get 250,000 rubles when you have a new baby to take care of."

A Russia awash in oil money can pay her people to have more babies, and, with an improved economic situation, Russia has enjoyed an uptick in birthrates. This is a good thing, so far as it goes, but the gains from demographic incentives will likely be too slight to solve the problem of a shrinking "core population." Russia must deal with her children's mortality rates—especially those of working-age males, who are prone to alcoholism, suicide, murder (many of which are undoubtedly alcohol related), heavy smoking, and stress (contributing to heart disease). Influential political and economic constituencies also profit from the vodka and tobacco sales that play such a big role in Russian mortality rates.

The economic improvements in Russia have not been widely distributed. The gap between rich and poor is wide and getting wider, and inflation has had a greater impact on the poor, particularly when it comes to food and housing costs.

Apart from mortality rates and economic disparities, there is the problem of abortion; in Russia, abortions often outpace live births.

There is another problem, however, which no state program can solve—the spiritual problem of a people that has lost its faith and, with it, the sense that sharing in the miracle of creation by bearing and rearing children is both desirable and a duty before God and posterity. Pounding the patriotic drumbeat may help for a while, but, without a tie that binds the present generation to past and future, to ancestor and descendant, refrigerators and SUVs won't be enough to ensure that Russia survives.

—*Wayne Allensworth*

SHATTERING NORTH AMERICA

When President George W. Bush, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, and Mexican President Felipe Calderón met in Quebec in mid-August, they were greeted by news stories that had migrated into the mainstream media from the populist fringe, alleging that the three national leaders were conspiring to create a supranational North American Union (NAU). Responding to these rumors, President Bush dismissed them as "scare tactics."

What set off concerns about an NAU (to be patterned after the European Union) was the creation two years ago of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP), at a summit held in Waco, Texas. The SPP has as its goal the economic integration of North America, to be furthered by the regional harmonization of regulations on transportation, food and product safety, intellectual property, and a host of other issues. At a summit in Cancun, Mexico, in March 2006, a North American Competitiveness Council was formed, with heavy representation from major corporations whose desire is to see all borders vanish, at least as barriers to the movement of goods and people. Their constant drone is that security measures against terrorism, drug running, and illegal immigration are slowing commercial transport.

These new groups all spring from the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1994 North American Free Trade Agreement. NAFTA was supposed to combine cheap Mexican labor with American capital and technology to improve competition with Asian rivals. C. Fred Bergsten and Jeffrey Schott of the Institute for International Economics testified to Congress in 1997 that "we wanted to shift imports from other countries to Mexico—since our imports from Mexico include more U.S. content and because Mexico spends much more of its export earnings on imports from the United States than do, say, the East Asian countries."

Following this model, imports from Mexico grew rapidly in the 1990's, but something else is driving activity now. Both the Bush administration and its critics are living in the past in thinking that global "free trade" is the foundation for anything resembling a North American Union.

Today, it is the massive wave of imports from Asia that is clogging West Coast ports and sending shippers and retailers on a search for new routes to bring even more foreign products into the United States. Container-ship traffic from China is growing at a rate of 15 percent per year. Between 2003 and 2005, annual imports from China increased by $92.2 billion; from other parts of Asia, by $41.0 billion.

At the very center of the SPP issue is a planned corridor of highways and railroads, dubbed the "NAFTA Highway," running from Mexico into the American Midwest. *Human Events* launched the story from the right, but it soon spread all the way across the spectrum to the *Daily Kos* on the left. Most of the stories have rehashed the debate over NAFTA, but what is really behind this transportation network heralds the collapse of NAFTA and its dream of a stronger continental economy.

The Chinese firm Hutchison Whampoa has partnered with Wal-Mart in a $300-million expansion of Lazaro Cardeñas to handle perhaps two million containers annually by the end of the decade. The American Chamber of Commerce in Guangdong, China, has conducted seminars promoting this Mexican port. Punta Colonet, about 150 miles south of Tijuana, is also being eyed for expansion to offload millions of additional containers filled with Asian imports. The Kansas City Southern Railway has bought the Mexican rail links, and the state of Texas is negotiating with a Spanish firm to build a corridor of toll roads from the border heading north. The final terminus of the planned transport network is the Kansas City, Missouri, "SmartPort." Its website proclaims that "the idea of receiving containers nonstop from the Far East by way of Mexico may sound unlikely, but . . . that seemingly far-fetched notion will become a reality."

While U.S.-based manufacturers will continue to suffer under the barrage of Chinese goods, Mexican industry will be smashed flat by what should be called a new Silk Road rather than a NAFTA highway. Clearly, the regional economic development goals of NAFTA are being abandoned.

Hundreds of the *maquiladora* assembly plants along the U.S.-Mexico border have relocated to China, leaving their Mexican workers behind. There is little chance for Mexican wages to rise if, at $1.50 per hour, they can be undercut by Chinese labor at one third of that wage. NAFTA was to be a means to lift Mexicans out of poverty and stem the flow of illegal immigration. A similar argument was made last year about the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). As Rep. Bob Inglis (R-SC) said during that floor debate, "I stand here convinced that it is the best strategy available to combine with our neighbors to the south to compete with the Chinese."

The new transport plans make a mockery of these arguments, as they are being constructed purely to help China improve her competitive advantage over all North and Central American commercial rivals. What is being built is truly a "Highway of Death" for both NAFTA and CAFTA. The resulting turmoil in the region will be felt in the United States.

It is well past time to rethink the sophistry of "free trade" with China. Instead of spending billions to give aid to Chinese traders, a major effort should be launched to rebuild and expand the production base of North America and to stem the massive outflow of capital and technology to Beijing. China is America's ambitious geopolitical rival—and everyone's economic rival. A key part of that effort would be to restructure NAFTA to create a true trade bloc that would drive Chinese goods off the continent, rather than into its heartland.

—*William Hawkins*

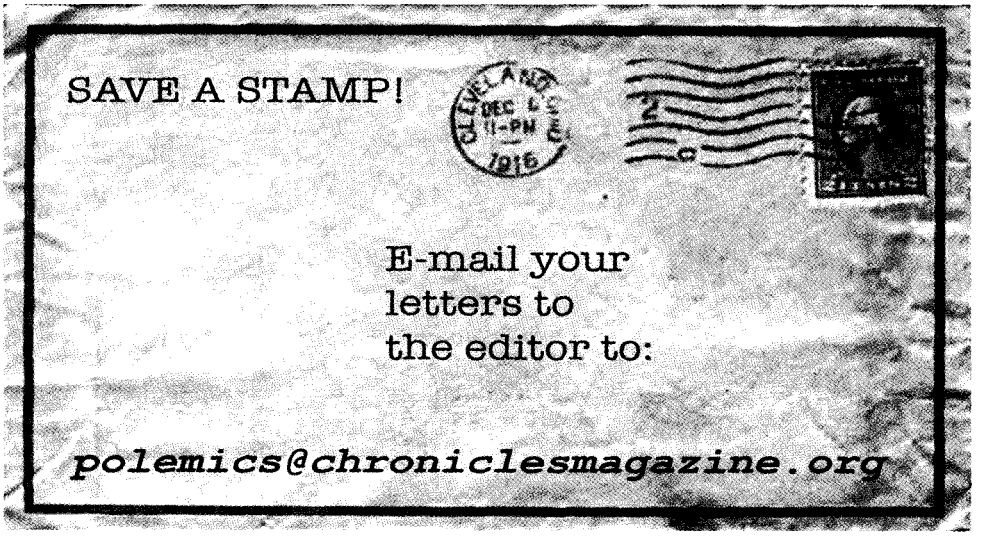
OBITER DICTA

We are pleased to announce the launch of a new website, the *Chicago Daily Observer* (*www.cdobs.com*). **Tom Roeser**, a longtime conservative activist and journalist, and a former member of The Rockford Institute's board of directors, is the site's editor. Look for regular contributions from the *Chronicles* editors.

Our poet this month is **John Nixon, Jr.** Mr. Nixon was the editor of the *Lyric* for 16 years. He has contributed to *America*, *Georgia Review*, the *New Yorker*, *Planet*, and other publications.

Our cover art is provided by our interior artist, **George McCartney, Jr.** Mr. McCartney studied at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and received a bachelor's of art from the State University of New York at Geneseo. Since 1997, he has worked in various media in the fields of illustration, graphic design, and textiles. George currently resides in North Carolina with his wife, Kristin, and their two children.

Our interior art is provided by **Melanie Anderson**. Mrs. Anderson, our designer, received her B.F.A. from Northern Illinois University.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by Thomas Fleming

"Make Me Do Right or Make Me Do Wrong, I'm Your Puppet"

Nicholas Chiaroscuro is one of the most important men in American politics. Not that he is a politician. Mr. Chiaroscuro does not aspire to the lofty position of political puppets whose only qualifications are an insipid face, a case of hair spray, and an infinite capacity for self-gratification. Chiaroscuro looks upon such creatures much as an experienced coach regards the brainless meat machines that are, alas, indispensable to the game he loves.

Like his rival, the late Karl Rogue, Nick Chiaroscuro was a protégé of the legendary Grant Blackpool, who pioneered the new science of hardball politicking. Blackpool was as wily and as mean as a snake, and, if Nick inherited his wiliness, Rogue got the meanness. "Why waste time being clever," Karl used to ask, "when an anonymous slander or blackmail threat can get the job done just as well?"

Nick is just the opposite and views electioneering as an art in itself. Results are only secondary. He is like the professional gambler who will never win honestly—a sucker's game—so long as he can cheat. It is a question of pride. He devised an approach to campaign commercials that he described as "subtextualizing." Friendly critics called the method "subliminal implants." His legion of enemies preferred "voodoo." As the names suggest, Nick designs commercials that win over viewers not by the explicit message but by indirectly planted suggestions. Now, as a campaign technique or legal trick, the method can be traced back at least to Cicero, who famously referred to Clodia's brother as her husband, then corrected himself, saying, "I always make that mistake." This generated a big laugh from a jury convinced that the pair had an incestuous liaison. Despite his Italian name, Nick has probably never heard of Cicero, and he may have based his method on the famous Willie Horton commercials that suggested, and none too subtly, that Mike Dukakis would give *carte blanche* to Negro murderers.

Willie Horton was a sledgehammer, so ponderous it would give a hernia to the Republicans who wielded it. Nick had a much lighter touch. Sometimes, he was absolutely Byzantine. It was he who suggested Viagra commercials to Bob Dole, who could never pass up a chance either to leer at the camera or to make easy money. Other Republican strategists were aghast. Karl Rogue told him that Dole would make himself and the party a laughingstock. Chiaroscuro observed that Dole and the party had already done about all that could be done in that direction. What could have been worse than the Doleman's '96 campaign? The point, he insisted, was to rescue both the candidate and the party by suggesting indirectly that they were not a bunch of desiccated Kansas rubes but real sex machines, who would go on fornicating all the way to the grave. "Look at Clinton. Apart from a few old Republican garden-party hags, people love him, women as much as men."

Nick, it hardly needs saying, thought Newt Gingrich was crazy to attack Bill Clinton, and not just because Newt's own private life was less creditable than the President's. Great men are often scoundrels. "Look at Julius Caesar and Napoleon, look at Jack Kennedy for Chrissake. They lied, cheated, and stole; they murdered and they whored, but the people loved them. Nixon, on the other hand, was a faithful husband, and look where that gets him. Even that dumb jerk Kissinger can now make fun of him, and where would Henry have been without Nixon? Teaching international relations at Nebraska Tech, where he belongs."

I had heard a great deal about the Chiaroscuro touch and wanted to meet him. Fortunately, I had friends who had known Grant Blackpool back in C——, and they assured him that I was a harmless crank, the kind of highbrow philosopher-type who could be an eyewitness to murder and the murderer would get off. Even if I attacked Chiaroscuro, no one would pay any attention. Prompted by such recommendations, the great man agreed to see me on a Saturday evening he was going to spend, as he always does, watching television.

I wanted to ask him about all the tricks that have been used to propel faceless nonentities into the Senate and up to the White House. Where did they come from, how can they be learned—or are they, rather, the reflexes of a shark that smells blood? Chiaroscuro acted as if he hadn't heard me; perhaps he hadn't. Remote control in one hand, a small 7-Up bottle in the other (a tribute to his hero, the VP), he fixed his gaze on the TV screen.

"Look at this. Whaddaya see?"

"It's just a commercial," I replied absentmindedly, "for a middle-priced car."

"Just a commercial. Even a guy who knows Greek must have heard that TV programs are the stuff inserted between commercials. What is this commercial saying?"

"I suppose it says buy this car, because it is fast and good-looking and takes you nice places. What else?"

"The car doesn't matter. It's an American car made by affirmative-action workers. Everyone knows it's crap . . . "

I tried to interrupt, but he cut me off. "Advertising is never about the product. Notice, for example," he explained in a condescending tone, "notice how in the beginning the guy is in a suit and tie, obviously a worried businessman. He's alone. But when he gets in the car he has taken off his tie and rolled up his sleeves, and there's a girl beside him—and what a girl! Not just a bimbo, but the kind of girl you'd want to marry—this car goes for 57-9 without extras, and the guys on the line could never afford it. No, this car is for accountants and 35-year-old execs looking for the right kind of woman. Buy this, and you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

buy a new life."

"Yes, I understand. Sex sells."

"Sure," he said, "sex sells, but so do fear, greed, gluttony, envy, and hate." He clicked the remote, and we saw a commercial for "silver" vitamins. "See that, these 60-somethings still have it. They're going to the beach to make out, but better than that, they're cheating death. If they can just stretch out their lousy pointless lives long enough, the scientists will come up with a cure for death—that is, if global warming doesn't destroy the planet."

He switched again, this time to a detergent commercial. "Notice how the little black girl is telling the adult white woman what detergent to use. The black kid is a twofer. The rule in advertising is even more explicit than in government grants: Black trumps white, youth trumps maturity—and old age—female trumps male. If you don't like it, join the Ku Klux Klan or, better yet, write letters to your congressman."

"This is all very interesting, if a little obvious, but I came here to learn about political strategy . . . "

"What do you think I'm talking about? You think I like commercials? I can't stand television and don't watch any movies made after the death of Steve McQueen."

I made the mistake of asking him "Why not?" He explained that, with very few exceptions, there were no actors or stars or even actual human beings in Hollywood films, only the faux-celebrities manufactured by his counterparts in what is jokingly called "the industry."

"The new *breed*—and I use the word advisedly—of celebrities is not even good-looking. Take Brad Pitt or, better still, Lindsay Lohan. She can't sing, can't act, and has the face of a weasel in heat, but they—or should I say, we—put her on the front page of every so-called newspaper in the country. Even after the makeovers, she's not beautiful, but what difference does it make? She and Britney and Paris Hilton define beauty, and someone who thinks otherwise should move to France."

"If you can make anyone a star, why not pick someone talented or at least beautiful?"

"What would be the point? Where would be the fun? It's the same in politics. Yes, we could have groomed an intelligent and principled war hero like Admiral Stockdale and made him a senator, but it was a lot more fun to pick John McCain, who is so goofy he does not even realize how many people he annoys every time he opens his mouth. The best part is giving him this campaign-reform shtick, when the guy has more mob contacts than Barry Goldwater or Paul Laxalt. But, my friends in the other party have become the real pros. Who are their two front-runners? Hillary and Obama?

"I'd love to manage Obama. The guy's been in politics, what, 13 years, and no one knows anything he's ever done or any stand he's ever taken. He's a dream walking, so dumb he thinks he's smart. I think he actually believes his message, 'Time for a change.' He never asks himself, 'Change from what to what?' It's just time for a change. Ever notice, by the way, that when one of these guys runs for a new office, it's always time for a change, but once they're up for reelection, they want us to stick with experience?"

I asked him if Obama could win. "Probably not," he told me, somewhat sadly. "What does he have to offer? Their party already has the black vote and the conscience-stricken liberals, so they don't need him. A few liberal or moderate Republicans would cross over, just to feel good about voting for a minority, but after his crack about nuking Pakistan, he makes even liberals nervous.

"To tell the truth, I think Hillary put him up to it."

I looked incredulous. "Sure. Until Obama got in, nobody in the party leadership could stand her. I'm positive they were going to do a Howard Dean on her—remember how they manufactured the scream?—but with Obama in the race, she becomes the less awful alternative."

"Issues? What issues? Romney used to be pro-choice, but now he says he's pro-life. What kind of man could change his mind on that kind of issue without spending the rest of his life on his knees, asking his god for forgiveness? Look at George Bush. He campaigned on an isolationist platform, and his chief advisor persuaded him to play McKinley. Apparently nobody remembered that McKinley opposed the Spanish-American War and only got dragged in by big-business imperialists like Teddy Roosevelt, his loony future vice president."

I asked him about John Edwards. "That's too easy. Even you could figure it out. On the superficial level, Edwards is impossible: just an expensive haircut, a cross between a hippie and a cocker spaniel. He is another smarmy rich kid, like Al Gore, who bleeds for the poor he keeps at a distance from his palace. He is as wacky as Hillary and Obama. But on a deeper level, he is posing as the salvation of the Democratic Party. As his wife said so sweetly the other day, 'John can't help it if he isn't black or a woman.' Translation: He may be a wacko, but he's a white male wacko. If Obama or Hillary were the candidate, he or she would not only lose but just might alienate the white male vote (especially in the South) for the next ten years. Remember McGovern? After him, the Democrats had to destroy Nixon and undermine national security to get little Jimmy elected."

"What about the Republican candidates?"

"Candidates? I don't see any candidates. They're all talking about Romney after the Iowa Straw Poll. Mitt—who'd vote for someone named Mitt, anyway; what's next, Muffy?—Mitt has got to be running for VP or a cabinet post. He's too religious for country-clubbers, and, being a Mormon, he loses the mackerel-snappers and the Pat Robertson types. In this party,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what's left?

"Then there is the very shy Fred Thompson, probably the best bet. Good old Republicans think that if their best President was Ronald Reagan, who was an actor, then Fred Thompson, being an actor, would make a great President. That's American logic today."

I told him he had spotted an undistributed middle. "Undistributed middle. I like that. Then my whole method is to capture the undistributed middle American."

"Does Giuliani have a chance, despite the children who hate him and the rumored mob connections?"

"Listen, just because Rudy's Italian, doesn't mean he's in the Mafia. Look at me—the closest I've got is an uncle who ran numbers back in the day. Rudy's biggest problem is that he is New York, and every normal American, especially Republicans, hates New York. But, if there's another 911, he can do it. Scared people will vote for anyone they think is strong. It's what they call the Führer Principle."

"You're pretty cynical about politicians . . . "

"Cynical about politicians? Not me. I'm an artist. I don't vote, because it would only confuse me. I can't afford to get attached.

"No, it's not politicians I despise; it's the American people and their so-called wonderful democracy. This is a country where people eat Big Macs and think it's food, drink fruit-flavored Miller Lite and think it's beer, watch Spielberg movies and think they're entertaining—or, better still, they're art—and read David Frum and Charles Krauthammer thinking they're political intellectuals instead of being political flacks like me, except they're not good enough to get into the practical side of the business.

"When I started out, I knew politicians were rats, but I thought the people were good, only they were misguided."

I tried to stick an oar in: "Didn't Metternich say the German people were good but their heads were confused?"

Ignoring my interjection, he continued. "Then how could bums like Harding or Truman get elected? If the American people had good hearts, Ron Paul would be President. Let's get serious. The whole art of politics today is to pander to the weakness, fear, and greed of the people."

"But surely there are issues . . . "

"Issues? What issues? Romney used to be pro-choice, but now he says he's pro-life. What kind of man could change his mind on that kind of issue without spending the rest of his life on his knees, asking his god for forgiveness? Look at George Bush. He campaigned on an isolationist platform, and his chief advisor persuaded him to play McKinley. Apparently nobody remembered that McKinley opposed the Spanish-American War and only got dragged in by big-business imperialists like Teddy Roosevelt, his loony future vice president.

"What's the point of going on? We killed a couple of hundred thousand Flips and got dragged into a war in the Pacific with the Japs. Do you really think that war was an issue? It was just a little sweetening to the plutocrats who owned the party. Nothing has changed, and it shouldn't."

I tried to protest, but Nick Chiaroscuro had dismissed me—and the history of the republic—from his thoughts. Taking a swig on his 7-Up, he turned on FOX News and laughed uproariously at how badly Sean Hannity delivered the lines he had been fed. "Sap doesn't even understand 'the issue,'" he chortled.

I knew it was time to leave and closed the door slowly on the way out. c

A Field of Peonies

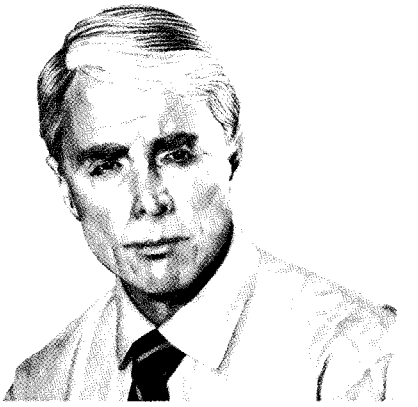
by John Nixon, Jr.

Filched neatly from the realm
Of slumbering King Cotton,
The two alluvial acres
Produced each spring another
Kind of white harvest: buds,
Shipped on their leafy stems,
To bloom—a floral lint—
In Northern flower shops.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by Roger D. McGrath

Submarine Ace of Aces



Now that the youngest of our World War II veterans, with but a few exceptions, are in their 80's, I fear that, as they die, memory of them will die also. While teaching history in college for more than 30 years—15 of those at UCLA, where a single class could have more than 400 students—I was the target of book representatives from a dozen or more publishers. Nearly every year, I was presented with sample copies of new U.S. history textbooks. Each new textbook devoted more space to obscure figures of modest significance who were black or American Indian or female. I searched the same books in vain for mention of the most prominent of our World War II heroes. Where was the most decorated American, Audie Murphy? The hero of the Battle of Midway, Wade McClusky? The first recipient of the Medal of Honor, Butch O'Hare? The top ace, Dick Bong? The top naval ace, Dave McCampbell? The top Marine ace, Pappy Boyington? The commander of the 101st Airborne who replied "Nuts" to the Germans and held fast at Bastogne, Anthony McAuliffe? Or the submarine ace of aces, Dick O'Kane? Nowhere to be found. These were the heroes I learned about as a child. They were written about in books, depicted in movies, and, most importantly, were the topic of conversations in the homes and neighborhoods of America.

The Silent Service held a special fascination for many, and Hollywood was not remiss during the 1940's and 50's in portraying American submarines in death-defying missions against the Japanese in the Pacific. Two hundred and fifty U.S. Navy submarines went on at least one patrol during World War II. Fifty-two never returned. Their epitaph: "Overdue, presumed lost." More than 3,500 submariners lost their lives, a fifth of all who went on patrol. Their rules of engagement were simple: "Find 'em. Chase 'em. Sink 'em." And the submariners did just that, sending more than 1,100 Japanese merchant ships and 214 Japanese naval vessels to the bottom.

The submariner who sank the most Japanese ships was Richard "Dick" O'Kane. He performed best under the greatest pressure in the most dangerous circumstances. Before he went into action, he was described by a fellow officer as talkative and boastful and something of a loose cannon. The same officer said that, once a battle commenced, O'Kane

> was calm, terse and utterly cool. My opinion of him underwent a permanent change. It was the most dramatic example I was ever to see of a man transformed under pressure from what seemed almost adolescent petulance to a prime fighting machine.

The prime fighting machine, first as the executive officer of *Wahoo* and then as the commander of *Tang*, sank 31 Japanese ships. Once, while on the surface and surrounded by Japanese ships, O'Kane sent *Tang* headlong into a Japanese destroyer that was racing directly at her. O'Kane miraculously put his last torpedo into the bow of the enemy ship, and down she went, allowing *Tang* to escape. If sinking the most Japanese ships and a surface duel with a Japanese destroyer were not enough, O'Kane also set the record for rescuing downed American pilots. During April 1944, he guided *Tang* dangerously close to reefs at Truk to rescue pilots by the ones, twos, and threes until he had 22 smiling aviators aboard his sub.

Although the Japanese had many chances to sink the daredevil O'Kane, they never succeeded. O'Kane sank himself. In October 1944, after sinking five Japanese ships in a series of spectacular encounters in the narrow waters of the Formosa Strait, O'Kane was gunning for a sixth Japanese ship when one of *Tang*'s own torpedoes malfunctioned, turned about, and hit the sub. The explosion rocked the boat from stem to stern. O'Kane and eight others on the bridge were hurled into the sea. Hanging on to debris, they watched as *Tang*'s stern suddenly sank, pulling the rest of the sub to the bottom, 180 feet below.

About two-dozen sailors remained alive inside *Tang*, her stern resting on the ocean floor and her sleek hull pointed toward the surface at a steep angle. An officer alone in the conning tower took a deep breath, opened a hatch, and made a free ascent to the surface. A dozen others, some with the Momsen lung, were able to get out of the sub also. Eight made it to the surface alive. Only five survived to be captured by the Japanese. The officer in the conning tower and the others were the only American sailors in the entire war to escape from a sunken submarine.

Meanwhile, O'Kane and the eight men with him swam, treaded water, and clung to wreckage. By the next morning, only O'Kane and four others remained alive. Picked up by a Japanese destroyer, they were beaten and interrogated. Taken first to Formosa, they were eventually confined in a prison camp near Tokyo. The Japanese failed to notify the Red Cross, as required by conventions, of their capture. O'Kane and the others would remain missing in action for the duration of the war. The Japanese tortured and interrogated O'Kane almost daily. He was near death when liberated, weighing only 88 pounds and wracked with scurvy and beriberi. He slowly recovered from the inhuman ordeal and testified at the Tokyo war-crimes trials. His gallantry during the war earned him the Medal of Honor, three Navy Crosses, three Silver Stars, and, for wounds sustained, the Purple Heart. The Annapolis graduate remained in the Navy until 1957, serving for two years as the CO of the Submarine School and retiring as a rear admiral.

Jack Kennedy, the commander of a PT boat who also served as President of the United States, said, "A nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces, but also by the men it honors, the men it remembers." Yet, America's most decorated sailor of World War II who put nearly a quarter-million tons of Japanese shipping on the bottom, hastening the end of the war and saving countless Marine lives on Pacific islands, is left unmentioned in today's textbooks. c

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Pop Culture and Politics

Passing By the Train Wreck

by Christopher Sandford

If Macbeth were alive today, he would probably make an appearance in the public confessional with Oprah Winfrey and, in all likelihood, would emerge as a prime candidate for *Big Brother* or one of the other "reality" shows that crowd our airwaves. Macbeth would be helped to come to terms with his domestic issues and would, in turn, deliver some wrenching monologue to the viewing audience exhorting them to become similarly "empowered," empowerment being the highest attainment both of mind and spirit known to modern man.

In due course, we could expect to see the thane of Glamis rewarded with his own show, which would spawn the inevitable line of accessories—everything from rhinestone-clad daggers to insomnia medications. There would be a brisk trade in replica witches' cauldrons among broadly the same audience as that drawn to the occult antics of Mr. Marilyn Manson. Critics would race to fawn over their latest celebrity protégé. The taste-makers at MTV would uniformly speak in Macbeth's voice and would wrinkle up their noses at anything that had a bad smell for him. As a converted warmonger, Macbeth's views on the conflict in Iraq would be received with an awe normally reserved for the truisms of Gen. Wesley Clark. The competition for an exclusive interview would be brutal. One can imagine the jockeying between Larry King and Barbara Walters to secure the rights to slip their guest into a media jacuzzi of mutual reassurance and respect.

More to the point, Macbeth's every pronouncement on the current state of politics and society would be seized upon by a predominantly youthful audience who have increasingly turned away from mainstream sources and instead look to "pop culture" for their news and views. Anyone in doubt about this phenomenon has only to tune in to the shrill, round-the-clock "Rock the Vote" programming fronted by the likes of P. Diddy (a.k.a. Sean Combs) to be found on every available music and entertainment channel in the months preceding a national election. For professional reasons, in the summer of 2004, I was compelled to sit through one such transmission featuring Bruce Springsteen, about whom I had written a book. The musical component of the show, in which Springsteen appeared as a kind of sawdust Steinbeck, was at least modestly engaging, but anyone looking to him for deeper enlightenment on, say, the paradox of securing peace and liberty through a military action was in for a sorry disappointment. According to my notes from the subsequent interview, the rock star's comments on Iraq consisted of little more than "Yep" and "Nope," laced with the occasional choice anti-Republican tirade.

With the benefit of hindsight, Bill Clinton's saxophone-playing 1992 appearance on MTV would seem to be one of those pivotal moments, much like his subsequent ruminations on marijuana and on his taste in underwear, in the evolution of politics as another branch of the entertainment industry. Critics still debate the chicken-and-egg dilemma of which came first, the electorate's taste for freewheeling, taboo-busting candidates such as Clinton, and the concomitant rise of their celebrity backers, or a sudden awakening on the part of the politicians. The answer would appear to be a bit of both. The sort of bolshie, youth-led cultural radicalism of America in the early 1990's, largely a reaction to the Gulf War and to mass affluence, provided a new market for supposedly switched-on political leaders as much as for idiosyncratic pop icons of the stripe of the late Kurt Cobain. All it took was for a few socially alert pragmatists such as Clinton to infiltrate the system, which was simultaneously enlivened by a press corps whose mean age had fallen to something on the order of 17, and the emphasis would henceforth be on giving the public what it wanted rather than on any moral niceties. This development arguably reached its apogee in May 2005, when Tony Blair and his wife, Cherie, neither one a martyr to false modesty, took time away from the British general election to discuss their sex life with the *Sun*. In what may have been a characteristic exaggeration, Blair revealed that he and Cherie "do it at least five times [a] night," adding that, "I am up for more depending on how I feel." The couple then exchanged views on various body parts, leading Mrs. Blair to invite her husband to strip off publicly. "You keep your hands to yourself, Cherie," the prime minister retorted. The Labour Party press office appeared bemused at the subsequent controversy, limited as it was to what Mr. Blair has characterized as "the decaying forces of conservatism" in the United Kingdom. "They are married, so why shouldn't they talk about sex?" a spokesman said.

Meanwhile, it has become almost an article of faith that today's entertainers should be claimed by partisans of both the left and the right. When television first infiltrated our lives in the 1950's, one of the new medium's chief functions was to act as an emotional pick-me-up for a weary public. Somehow, that mission statement got lost over the years. Whatever one makes of their acting skills, many of today's performers, and an even higher percentage of their pop-music counterparts, offer a monotonous diet of screwed-up nihilism (part of the unrelenting war on family values), crass histrionics, and phony salves, whether delivered from on or off stage. Both they and their various escapades have become culturally polarizing in a way that would have been hard to imagine in the era of Milton Berle. Even without them so much as speaking, these individuals are routinely transformed into politically divisive figures whose every provocation, however trite, is analyzed *ad nauseam* on talk radio and elsewhere. Consider the enduring case of Janet Jackson's infamous "wardrobe malfunction" at the 2004 Super

---

Christopher Sandford is a British-born, Seattle-based writer. His biography of the director Roman Polanski will be published this month by Century.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bowl. That once austere daily bulletin board of the British establishment, the *Times*, now sadly slumming it as a tabloid, had this to say of Miss Jackson's aureole-baring exhibition: "The physical spectacle [was] at best negligible, but will inevitably be the subject of a prolonged action-replay debate, [such] is the now universal need for these incidents to mean something to us." Note that the newspaper does not speak of a "regrettable need" or even a "pervasive need." The word was *universal*.

These days, pretty much everything we see in the lively arts is part of the ongoing culture wars.

Late last year, I found myself in a Canadian hotel room, channel-hopping between the coverage of Gerald Ford's funeral and that of James Brown. It would be hard to imagine a more vivid contrast than that presented by the two ceremonies. In the case of the 38th president, there was a lying-in-state at the U.S. Capitol followed by services at Washington National Cathedral and at Grace Episcopal Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, as well as a private service attended by Mrs. Ford and her children in Palm Desert, California, and, finally, interment in the family crypt next to the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum. The whole spectacle—which was actually quite restrained as presidential obsequies go—involved some 700 serving military personnel, a precision team of protocol experts from the Joint Force Headquarters National Capital Region/Military District of Washington, assorted representatives from the State Department and the Department of the Interior, and a significant presence of Secret Service officials, sheriff's deputies, and others, including a dedicated group of press spokesmen deployed across three states. For all its grandeur, the entire occasion was distinguished by the most flagrantly unfashionable sense of self-restraint among the principal mourners. Mrs. Ford and her family evidently preferred a process of internal grieving to the now apparently mandatory appearance on *Larry King Live*. The Fords' quiet dignity struck me, several thousand miles away, as being almost unwatchably moving.

Contrast this to the seething, disco-bopping crowd that thronged around James Brown's open coffin in Augusta, Georgia, while the late singer's band performed a spirited version of "Sex Machine," among other uptempo numbers. After peak-decibel orations by friends including the Rev. Dr. Jesse Jackson and one Bootsy Collins, Michael Jackson bounded up to the podium to announce that James Brown had been "cool" and "an inspiration" before briefly breaking into an animated dance sequence, an occasion captured for posterity by the flashing of several hundred camera phones. It says something both for the eulogies and the overall tenor of the affair that, seated in the audience, the Rev. Al Sharpton appeared to possess plenipotentiary gravitas by comparison. Of course, one can argue that the two events did no more than accurately reflect the public personae of the deceased, but it was instructive to compare the ensuing media commentary: Brown, with a few notable exceptions, was pushed onto the public as an invigorating free spirit and social crusader (I gave up counting the use of the word *empowering*), while Ford and his cortège clearly belonged among the waxworks. As is so often the case these days, the unmissable message of the mainstream news coverage was that our hearts should not only be in the right place, but worn on our sleeves. Whether this is a psychologically sound development is not for a journalist to say. But it marks a major shift in what were, within living memory, deeply embedded traditions in this country that encouraged self-control and disparaged exhibitionism, which should not be allowed to pass unnoticed.

Thanks, in large part, to the insatiable growth of talk radio, and television's pervasive *Entertainment Tonight*-style programming, even the most peripheral "celebrity" is now positively exhorted to favor us with his or her thoughts on war, peace, and the state of our culture. A major milestone in this direction came at the 2003 Academy Awards, an occasion on which Michael Moore took the opportunity to share his concerns, soon to be echoed from the same stage by the likes of Nicole Kidman and Chris Cooper, on the imminent Iraq invasion. On receiving his Best Actor award for his role in *The Pianist*, Adrien Brody, in turn, chose not so much to offer the traditional thanks to his colleagues on the film but to ruminate on his "buddies" currently serving (much, one gathered, to his distaste) overseas. Both sides of the unrelenting public debate that followed treated these well-scripted performers as though they had something genuinely of interest to say, despite (or, perhaps, because of) the conspicuously limited intellectual background, blinkered political judgement, and lack of substance behind the wisecracks and slogans of the celebrities involved. Television pundits such as Chris Matthews recycled their views for days afterward, a courtesy that it would be hard to imagine them extending to a mere party politician. We can be thankful, at least, that the same ceremony spared us the insights of Roman Polanski, who won his first and as yet only Oscar in the category of Best Director. Having fled the United States in 1978 immediately before sentencing on a charge of unlawful intercourse with a 13-year-old girl, Polanski prudently declined to appear to collect his statuette in person.

Whether or not it is a healthy development that the likes of Michael Moore seek increasingly to educate rather than merely entertain their audience, disappointingly few of their public effusions would seem to challenge the prodigious indifference of the American electorate effectively. Most of the ideologies in question remain largely a mélange of utopian-socialist mumblings, interspersed with greeting-card pleas for world peace and universal good health. Moore himself, a gifted propagandist, makes some typically astute if selective points in his latest manipulative documentary *Sicko*, but then rather spoils the effect by indulging in a long, uncritical paean to the British National Health Service, an institution, as any Briton knows, of quite staggering backwardness and administrative sclerosis. To cite just one recent example, the NHS saw fit to withhold the clinically proved cancer-fighting drug Herceptin for more than five years after it was made readily available throughout the rest of Europe and the United States, in order for the relevant body to conduct "additional cost-benefit analyses." There are no immediately available figures of the number of patients who died while awaiting the outcome. And it isn't just Herceptin. The British cancer charity BACUP recently published a list of 23 such drugs it says are being unnecessarily denied to patients at any price, a statistic somehow omitted in Moore's at times unintentionally comic film. Nor does the director dwell at any length on the ramshackle, amateurish ministrations of a healthcare system in which many of its leading practitioners are at best barely conversant with the English language, while others, it now emerges, have been more concerned with injuring or murdering their fellow citizens with car bombs than in discharging their traditional duties as healers.

For sheer arrogant naiveté, even Moore must defer to George Clooney, a man whom *Forbes* has named among the "ten most trusted" individuals in America, and who, as such, enjoys sig-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nificantly higher ratings than such traditional authority figures as the president and Congress, the Catholic Church, or even Walter Cronkite at his most avuncular. In February 2006, Clooney made the less-than-startling announcement that he is a liberal and went on to say that "the liberal movement ethically, you know, has stood on the right side of an awful lot of issues. We thought that blacks should be allowed to sit at the front of the bus and women should be able to vote. It was us [*sic*] who knew that McCarthy was bad, and that the Vietnam war was a mistake." Clearly, anyone rash enough to take issue with the "liberal movement," as defined by George Clooney, is not only on the wrong side of history but morally faulty.

Melanie Anderson

Steven Spielberg, another of those who periodically enjoy "America's most trusted" status, revealed this past summer that he had taken the time to familiarize himself with the "impressive field" of Democratic presidential candidates and was convinced that Hillary Clinton was the best qualified among them. "Hillary," he elaborated, "is a strong leader and is respected the world over. As president, she will bring all America back together, rebuild our prestige abroad and ensure our protection here at home." Spielberg's remarks were instantly emblazoned around the world and are said to have been responsible for an overnight four-point rise in the poll ratings of the junior senator from New York. Mrs. Clinton, by all accounts, is a ruthlessly accomplished political operator, from whom doubtless we will hear much more over the next year. But the president to "bring all America back together"? Spielberg possesses some sterling qualities, but an unerring grasp of the political landscape would seem not to be among them.

Meanwhile, many of the same performers from 1985's Live Aid, a seminal pop-political event that successfully raised not only money but the participants' profiles, returned to bring us the Live Earth concerts of July 2007. The singer and sometime actor Sting took the opportunity to remind us all of our responsibilities to the planet, a cause in which he is something of a pioneer among the performing arts. This, of course, is the same paragon of self-denying minimalism who, at the last count, was known to own four properties in the United Kingdom, in addition to a New York condominium, a beach villa in Malibu, and a 600-acre estate in Tuscany. That makes a total of seven residences—each, one can only imagine, equipped with rather more than the most basic domestic amenities. One might tentatively hazard the guess that Sting similarly has access to a significantly larger-than-average number of high-performance vehicles and is on terms of some familiarity with the concept of private jet travel. Sting's friend Sir Elton John, for his part, continues to pronounce at length on America's troubled post-September 11 mores and has spoken of the vigorous, law-enforced "suppression" of any and all artistic dissent from the Washington "regime." Yet the ruthless Bush dragnet somehow fails to account for Sir Elton himself, whose various grievances are taken at face value by the mainstream media, and whose numerous causes and campaigns remain visible to the point of ubiquity.

Just last year, pop's equivalent of the unquiet dead, the Rolling Stones, found themselves lavished with critical goodwill on the somewhat tentative basis of a song called "Sweet Neocon" from their most recent CD, *A Bigger Bang*. On their accompanying U.S. tour, for which they charged between $160 and $350 per seat, the newly radicalized group, sexagenarian millionaires all, were sponsored by the Ameriquest company, known for its robust marketing of loans to the fiscally challenged or dispossessed. In 2005, Ameriquest set aside $325 million to settle a predatory-lending case, in which 30 federal and state prosecutors had accused the mortgage provider of charging "hidden fees and higher-than-promised interest rates." That same day, President Bush named Ameriquest's chairman and CEO, Roland Arnall, as ambassador to the Netherlands. Arnall and his wife, Dawn, had previously contributed some $5.5 million to Bush's 2004 political campaign.

I have had occasion to spend extended amounts of time in the company of most of the above pop performers, and what strikes me is not so much the cynicism that normally accompanies such a conveniently flexible morality, but a naiveté bordering, in at least one or two cases, on a baby-seal-like innocence. One could argue that this is a function of the pop musician's chosen career path, where the premium is on arrested emotional development, or, to put a psychoanalyst's spin on it, that such individuals have no "insight" into their compulsions. There may be less excuse for those in the media and elsewhere who treat the stars' every paroxysm as holy writ. In this respect, we might reasonably single out the British patronage system as interpreted for these past ten years by Tony Blair. Like so many other aspects of Blair's hapless administration, his wholesale distribution of the nation's highest honors to such brazen self-promoters as Sir Mick Jagger was characterized by dazzling cynicism and corruption masquerading as populism. It says something for our degraded political values that a cloaca-tongued singer whose most memorable public utterance remains his assurance that "We piss anywhere, man" (whereupon he promptly illustrated the fact) should be officially recognized on terms denied the vast majority of those who served their country in foreign wars.

> Policy was constructed from a wholesale borrowing of ideas, the intention being to make the regime look progressive and in tune [with] a debased culture. Measures and ideas did not need to be consistent, so long as they were popular, showy, easy to administer, preferably non-committal, and pre-digested enough to need no extra thought.

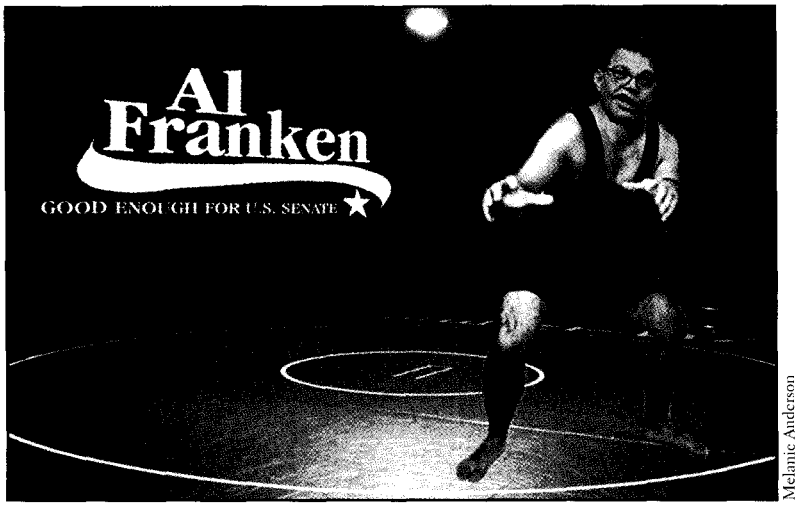
That was Denis Mack Smith's assessment of Mussolini's polity. It would seem that all too many of our modern masters have recycled it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

From Wellstone to Franken

The Era of Gopher Goofiness

by Ronald Kyser



Melanie Anderson

What happened to Minnesota—the stolid Nordic-and-German prairie republic, the mother of vice presidents, the place where Democrats were "Farmer-Labor" and seemed to mean it? Lately, when it comes to statewide office, Sven and Ole have been serving up not their usual hotdish and egg coffee but an uncharacteristic booya of Slavs and Jews, Easterners and wrestlers.

That the menu had changed was obvious by 1990, in what we might call the Minnesota's Rudy Awakening. Iron Range dentist and Democratic-Farmer-Laborer Gov. Rudy Perpich was a relic of a day when a double prole—pro-life proletarian—could still rise to the top of his party. He may be best remembered for an unsuccessful states' rights lawsuit against the Reagan administration concerning the use of the National Guard abroad. Another Rudy, Senator Boschwitz, who fled Nazi Berlin as a child, rose from a New York upbringing (the beginning of a Gopher State trend) to become the plywood king of the rapidly suburbanizing Upper Midwest. That success and the direct-mail skills he acquired along the way carried him to Hubert Humphrey's old seat as a Republican—or an "Independent-Republican," as they were called in 1978. He was, and is, a top fundraiser, who would soften his tough-guy pitches with a girlish smiley-face signature.

In 1990, Boschwitz was seeking his third term in the Senate; Perpich, his fourth as governor. Opposing them were Paul Wellstone, a Carleton College professor of political science (and 1964 Atlantic Coast Conference wrestling champion) who collected volunteers like Boschwitz did cash, and Arne Carlson (imagine Nelson Rockefeller, but poor, Swedish, and actually born in New York), who wanted Perpich's job. The Independent-Republican nomination went to Jon Grunseth, however, an Adonis with social views more palatable to regular churchgoers. Not so palatable, though, was the late-October story that he had hosted nude pool parties a decade earlier and had chased and pinched one of his teenaged daughter's bikinied friends. True or not, the charges were fumbled by the candidate, who desperately blamed Perpich for cooking the whole thing up, before finally ceding his ballot spot to Carlson. (The last-minute charge that emanated from a Boston women's group smells more like an effort to put the *Roe*-friendly Carlson back into the race).

While this fiasco unfolded, Wellstone rode around in his $3,500 green school bus and ran a remarkably cheap and innovative television campaign. "Fast Paced Paul" squeezed in all of his major positions before he rushed onto the bus, implicitly mocking the high budget of the other campaign. Ultimately, though, Senator Boschwitz was done in by his own people. Tired of putting up with constant references to Goliath, the Boschwitz campaign sent out a letter insisting that their candidate was the "Rabbi of the Senate" and a much more authentic Jew than Wellstone. There are better ways to win an election in Minnesota than accusing your opponent's wife of practicing Christianity. The letter was the talk of the state over the last weekend of the campaign, and Wellstone's final ad morphed that signature smiley face into Mr. Yuck, the children's poison warning.

In 1994, John Marty, son of Lutheran theologian Martin Marty, took on Carlson, only to show that voters, even liberal ones, prefer a secular Republican to a religious Democrat, and that turning down PAC money is not a smart move. Boschwitz decided in 1996 that, if Wellstone had the best political adman in the country, he would counter with the worst. Arthur J. Finkelstein, king of blunt-force attack ads, chose to run spots labeling Wellstone "embarrassingly liberal." (Everyone knew Wellstone was liberal, and, with Rod Grams now the state's junior senator, voters might have cut even the old Iron Range

---

Ron Kyser writes from the Land of Ten Thousand Lakes.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Communist Gus Hall a little slack.) Wellstone ran a more conventional campaign this time, with Beltway advisors and money, but he needn't have bothered. Boschwitz managed to top his 1990 *seppuku* by accusing the incumbent of having participated in a 1960's flag-burning at Chapel Hill. Some elementary rules were ignored here: Produce solid evidence; let the press handle it; and, most importantly, never look desperate. Boschwitz has since concentrated on fundraising for others; Finkelstein reportedly lives in Massachusetts with his common-law (or civil-law or constitutional-law) husband and advises campaigns in such places as Rumania.

How will Minnesotans regard Franken, come Election Day? Is Franken another Wellstone? Only if, by "Wellstone," you mean a "progressive Jewish wrestler." But, whereas Wellstone offered organization without money, Franken has money without organization. Is Franken another Ventura? Only if, by "Ventura," you mean "an opinionated comic actor."

Wellstone is not the only populist on the prairie. David Lebedoff is a Minneapolis lawyer who has been profiling a certain class of people since the 1970's—in *The New Elite* (1981) and its told-you-so follow-up, *The Uncivil War* (2004).

There is no shortage of paradoxes in Lebedoff's observations. What he calls the New Elite grew out of aptitude testing, but there is no admission requirement other than simply feeling one is smarter and, thus, more entitled. A person's background is admirably irrelevant; it is only important that he turn his back on it. "Reforms" aiming at proportionality, diversity, and openness prove, in practice, to be less democratic even than the old smoke-filled rooms. Politicians once knew the people and hired wonks to craft policy; now the pols are the wonks and need James Carville to explain the people to them. Most tellingly, because they are smarter and righter, New Elitists have no need to consult the other side and, thus, often cannot be bothered to think for themselves. Universities that once made dumb kids smart now make smart kids dumb, and we end up with an emotional and uncivil Ditzpolitik, directed by large but atrophied brains.

Lebedoff's heroes are the restrained majoritarian jurists Felix Frankfurter and Oliver Wendell Holmes, who told us, "A page of history is worth a volume of logic." That might be the motto of the "Left Behinds," Lebedoff's term for everyone else. The rejection of such common sense by the best and brightest has plagued the Democratic Party, in particular, over the last 40 years, leaving them vulnerable to the likes of Reagan and the Bushes, who can speak to the people as a corporate whole—and to the rare elitist such as Bill Clinton, who can perform in drag. That Wellstone could use armies of the elite as foot soldiers, while remaining outside of it himself, was quite a feat.

The Wellstone "cult" itself is noteworthy. Political crushes such as the McCarthy, McGovern, Anderson, Hart, and Dean campaigns last about 12 months and cover 50 states. Wellstone's went on for twelve years in one. "Don't park the bus" stickers are still common, as are those that ask, "What would Wellstone do?"

The senator was often forced to defend his votes on such things as military expenditures and the Defense of Marriage Act—to his New Elitists. The only thing he had to explain to Minnesotans at large was the breaking of his two-term pledge, a decision that cost him his life when his campaign plane crashed 11 days before the 2002 election. *The Uncivil War* uses the degeneration of his memorial service into a political rally as a prime example of the New Elite out of control.

Bill Hillsman is another angry Minneapolitan, but instead of issuing dark, Cassandrine warnings from the sideline, he chooses to get into the fight. Dragooned into the 1990 race as Wellstone's only acquaintance in advertising, he found that commercial practices not only adapt well to political campaigns but improve the standard. Candidates are not sold like soap, but maybe they should be. (David Ogilvy's adage comes to mind: "The customer is not a moron. She is your wife.")

Hillsman prefers candidates who are straightforward, likeable, and unorthodox, and, teamed with the right man, the results can be quite devastating to what he terms "Election Industry, Inc." Besides the ads that first elected Wellstone, he worked on Jesse Ventura's upset in 1998, Ralph Nader's Florida campaign in 2000, and Ned Lamont's primary displacement of Joseph Lieberman in 2006. Most of these battles, and Hillsman's ideas, are written up in his 2004 book, *Run the Other Way*.

Jesse Ventura left his native Minneapolis for the Navy SEALs and a career in professional wrestling. In 1990, he won the mayor's job in Brooklyn Park—a farming burg like its Michigan namesake, until postwar sprawl (and, no doubt, much Boschwitz plywood) transformed it into a cross-section of modern American life. It was the perfect background when the Reform Party came knocking in 1998.

Norm Coleman came to St. Paul from the original Brooklyn and, after many years of prosecuting for the state, ran for mayor in 1993. His reelection after switching parties so impressed the GOP that they chose him to face his former boss, Attorney General Hubert H. "Skip" Humphrey III. All assumed that Coleman and Ventura would split the fiscal conservative vote and Humphrey would sail to victory. Humphrey made sure Ventura was present at all debates—a blunder of Boschwitzian proportions.

Ventura flanked Coleman on the right by attacking his use of city funds to spur development. That, he said, was the province of the private sector. When the subject changed to the Defense of Marriage Act, he told a teary story of a friend's resentful parents barring his lover from attending his deathbed. Ventura understood centrism need not mean tepid difference-splitting. A wide range of positions with the right fulcrum will do the job as well, and is more exciting: light rail and concealed carry; strict construction and sodomogamy. (This strategy is counterintuitive but hardly new. You can see it develop from Napoleon and Bismarck through Mussolini, and it is visible in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the ping-pong name of the original "third way" centrists, the National Socialist German Workers' Party.)

Ventura's deathbed story inspired Hillsman to come aboard, and viewers were treated to another entertaining Halloween. The ads featured boys spouting Ventura's talking points over his plastic action figure, and Jesse "The Body" was depicted as Rodin's *Thinker* (Jesse "The Mind"). They got people talking, cost little to make, and local television stations would run them for free on the news.

Just as Honda once sold biking to nonbikers, Ventura sold nonvoters on voting. Every sixth voter registered on Election Day, and a majority of them chose Jesse (as did a plurality of the rest of Minnesota's voters). Coleman held his new base, finished a respectable second, and was well placed for a future run. As for the favorite, voters took the ballot literally: Whether it said "Skip Humphrey" or "Hubert the Third," they did, and he was. (Humphrey now heads, appropriately, the state's AARP chapter.)

This past February, comic and radio star Al Franken announced his intention to run for Coleman's seat, and his name is already eclipsing "Ethiopia Out of Somalia" as the Twin Cities' hot new bumper sticker. Franken grew up in St. Louis Park, a Jewish suburb of Minneapolis. He wrestled (of course) for his prep school before attending Harvard and making a career at *Saturday Night Live*—effectively trading states with Norm Coleman.

Lately, his books have been selling like mini donuts, but his wobbly radio venture, Air America, lacked a fundamental business need—need, itself. Launching a liberal network today is like stocking the pond with water.

How will Minnesotans regard Franken, come Election Day? Is Franken another Wellstone? Only if, by "Wellstone," you mean a "progressive Jewish wrestler." But, whereas Wellstone offered organization without money, Franken has money without organization. Is Franken another Ventura? Only if, by "Ventura," you mean "an opinionated comic actor." Unlike Ventura, Franken has never won an election before running for Senate. Is he a New Elitist? His book titles fairly drip with condescension—as do the people who buy them. It will be hard to shake this one.

Can Bill Hillsman help him? Hillsman has done work for both Air America and Franken's chief DFL rival, trial lawyer Mike Ciresi. But remember the warning of another adman, Bill Bernbach, that nothing will kill a bad product faster than good advertising. Another Hillsman client, Kinky Friedman, failed in the end, despite having more experience than Franken: He once ran for justice of the peace.

Elites, Election Industry, and experience aside, Franken's biggest albatross may simply be fellow Democrat Sen. Amy Klobuchar. Five of the last six Senate races were lost by the party holding the other seat. The opposition will be energized, and Minnesotans have sampled divided government and like the taste.

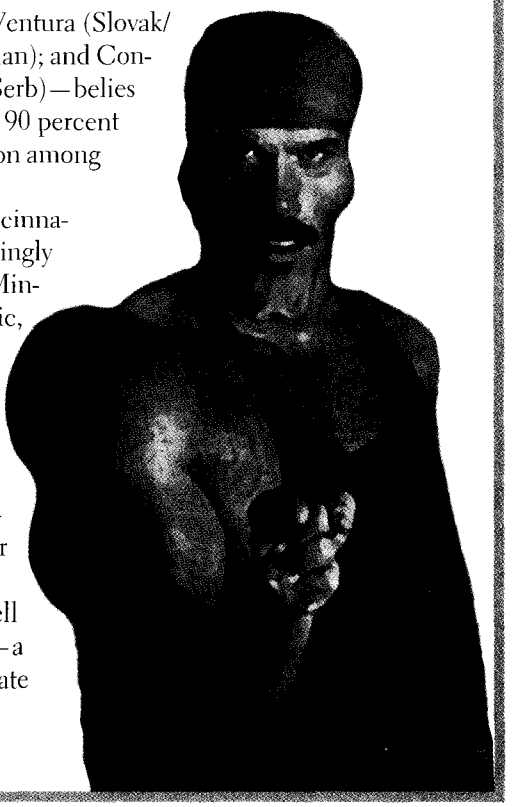
In the meantime, look for a civil war in the DFL as the normal white folks—er, experienced public servants—try to keep the stargazers from hijacking their party. If that means that the era of Gopher Goofiness is drawing to a close, well, it was fun while it lasted. c

Gopher Diversity

Minnesota's reigning Slavic regime—Governors Perpich (Croatian), Ventura (Slovak/Hungarian), and Tim Pawlenty (Polish); Sen. Amy Klobuchar (Slovenian); and Constitution Party senatorial candidate Miro Drago Kovatchevich (native Serb)—belies just how much of a unit the white population, which is still more than 90 percent of the electorate, has become. In Minnesota, the only significant division among whites concerns which wing of your church you sit in.

Nonwhite numbers tell a different story. The Twin Cities' and Cincinnati's minority populations are similar in size, but the latter's is overwhelmingly black, and bilateral tensions there erupted into riots in 2001. Roughly, Minnesota's urban-minority count divides evenly into black, Asian, Hispanic, and American Indian sectors, all of which are further broken down into various national origins. A high proportion of immigrants are refugees, and more blacks are African than in any other U.S. metropolitan area. Because minorities are forced to coalesce with—rather than *against*—whites, race relations are generally placid, and buying off voting blocs is less productive here than it is elsewhere. Minnesota's politics is essentially white politics, without interference. The moral: Their diversity is your strength.

Perhaps David Lebedoff's theory fits the national Democrats so well because, increasingly, New Elitists are the only whites left in the party—a nonwhite/nutwhite coalition, so to speak. It's less useful in his home state because normal white folks still feel they have a home in the DFL.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GOP Country

A Troubled Marriage

by Jack Trotter

Back in February, music historian J. Lester Feder published an article in the *American Prospect* entitled "When Country Went Right." As Feder would have it, country music wasn't always as "conservative" as it is today. Once upon a time, it seems, country music was a left-leaning, "populist" American art form. Then Richard Nixon, taking his cue from George Wallace, invited country-music stars to join him on the 1968 campaign trail and was fêted, in turn, by the Country Music Association at the opening of the new Grand Ole Opry House in 1974. "Once fiercely allied with working people," claims Feder, country music "married" into the conservative movement and never looked back. It is certainly true that, in recent decades, mainstream country music has become increasingly identified with Republican politics, and that the music's fealty to its hillbilly and blue-collar origins has all too often been compromised by Nashville's craven appetite for popular acceptance (and the sales figures it generates). It is also a fact that, before the 1960's, to the extent that it was political at all, country music and its fans were firmly Democratic. But the true story of country music's migration from the Democratic Dust Bowl to the Republican Tar Pit is a tad more complicated than what Feder chose to reveal.

First of all, if I may follow Feder's lead and speak of country music as populist art, we will do well to remember that populism has always been Janus-faced. Since the golden days of William Jennings Bryan, populist movements have generally championed the downtrodden factory worker, farmer, or middling small-business owner against the interests of "elites"—usually Eastern bankers, railroad magnates, establishment politicians, or, more recently, pointy-headed intellectuals. Frequently, this defense of the "real producers" of wealth against the bloodsuckers who exploit them has taken the form of egalitarian political and economic positions. On the other hand, the "populist persuasion" (as Michael Kazin has called it) has generally been culturally and morally conservative, and especially so in the South. The most enduring motifs in country music have always been those of kinship and homestead, heartbreak and the hope of a better world in the hereafter. If country music has sometimes raised its blue-collar hackles in class-conscious anger or celebrated those it believed to be the political champions of ordinary folk, it has far more often been deeply apolitical, or, when political, atavistically so. This is perhaps because of the powerful strain of Calvinist religiosity so prevalent in the Appalachian Scots-Irish, whose balladry and fiddle playing have been the wellspring of country music since its commercial inception in the 1920's.

Nevertheless, during the Great Depression, when country music was still in its infancy (and when the distinction between "country" and "folk" music had not yet been firmly drawn), the populist impulse often found expression in lyrical laments for the poor farmer's plight in hillbilly songs with a political bent, such as Vernon Dalhart's "Farm Relief Song," first recorded in 1929, or Bob Miller's "Those Campaign Lyin', Sugar Coated Ballot-Coaxin' Low Down Farm Relief Blues." Some of Woody Guthrie's Dust Bowl ballads also possess an enduring populist pathos, though his best-known composition, "This Land is Your Land," vies with "We Are the World" for sheer, unadulterated banality. Yet Guthrie, who first achieved commercial success on country radio, borrowed the melody for that folk anthem from a gospel song, the Carter Family's "When the World's On Fire" (1930), and I would argue that the finest country songs of the Depression era are those derived from the apolitical gospel tradition. Consider, for example, Alfred Brumley's haunting "I'll Fly Away" (1929), whose vision of liberation from a life of earthly toil has been taken up again and again by country and bluegrass singers: "When the shadows of this life have gone, I'll fly away; / Like a bird from prison bars has flown, I'll fly away."

If country-music fans in the 1930's voted overwhelmingly Democratic, that is hardly surprising. After all, most of them were Southerners, and Southerners had always voted Democratic. It is equally true, however, that FDR was enormously popular in the South. In such songs as W. Lee O'Daniel's "On to Victory, Mr. Roosevelt" or Billy Cox's "The Democratic Donkey is in His Stall Again," country singers celebrated FDR, scion of the Eastern elite, as a populist hero. But the real story here is not about populist aspirations fulfilled in the warm embrace of an invalid who understood the heartbreak and misery of the landless and the unemployed. To be sure, FDR was a master of smooth and all-embracing populist rhetoric. In his First Inaugural Address, he proclaimed his salvific mission to cleanse the temple of American civilization of the predatory capitalists who had profaned it: "The money changers have fled from their high seats in the temple of our civilization. We may now restore that temple to its ancient truths . . . social values more noble than mere monetary profit." Of course, as numerous critics of the New Deal have shown, FDR's true mission was not to drive out the money changers but to invite them to sit down and break bread with the Pharisees of Labor, and to offer a desperate American people sanctuary in exchange for their self-reliance. This bargain with the devil culminated in the proclamation of the Social Security Act, a secular vision of the Promised Land that seduced millions who should have known better.

During and after World War II, the popularity of country music began to reach well beyond the Sunbelt, spread by fiercely patriotic GIs and the millions of Southerners who migrated off the land and crossed the Mason-Dixon line in

---

Jack Trotter writes from Charleston, South Carolina.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

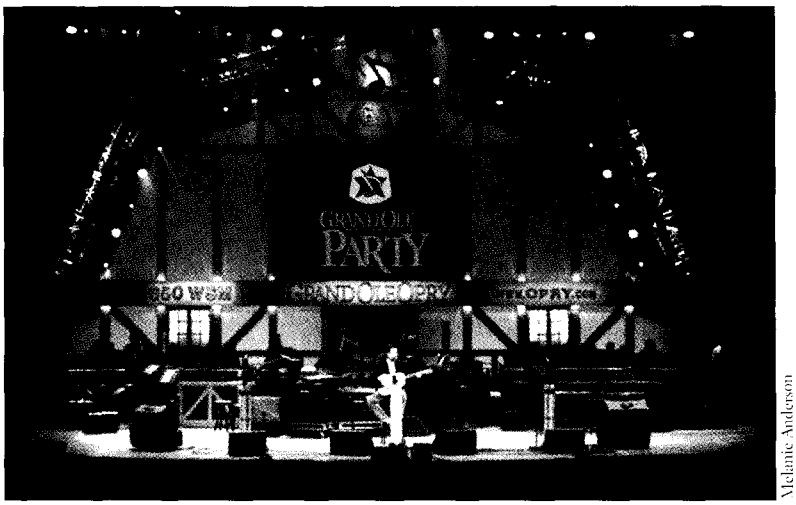
search of work. As this slow-motion diaspora unfolded, a subtle process of what has been called "Southernization" occurred among the nation's working classes. As labor sociologist James N. Gregory has documented, by the early 1960's, native-born Southerners accounted for as much as 20 percent of the blue-collar labor force in key industrial sectors outside the South: auto and aircraft manufacturing, trucking, the steel and rubber industries, and the construction trades. To Northern cities such as Detroit, Akron, Chicago, and Columbus, and to Los Angeles, San Diego, and Bakersfield, Southern laborers brought with them not only conservative cultural and moral values, but their religion, their love of stock-car racing, and their music. Bobby Bare's plaintive 1964 ballad "Detroit City" articulates the powerful nostalgia for the South that these laborers left behind:

'Cause you know I rode a freight train north to Detroit city,
And after all these years I find I've just been wasting my time.
So I think I'll take my foolish pride
Put it on a southbound freight and ride
Back to the loved ones
The ones I left behind.

But most of them never did return; they remained and spread their influence beyond the "Little Dixies" where they first congregated. Over time, country music became the musical voice, not just of the South, but of the American working classes, which, in turn, became increasingly conservative during this same period, years before the "right" turn that Feder describes.

This sociological and demographic development, though it is only one of several factors, strongly contributed to the eventual embrace of Republican politics by country music and its growing congregation of listeners. Equally important were changes in the agenda of the Democratic Party and the dawning perception among significant numbers of its traditional blue-collar constituency that the interests of the working man were no longer the party's first priority. Big Labor was increasingly seen as bloated and corrupt, its politics virtually indistinguishable from those of a federal bureaucracy committed to a radical civil-rights agenda that seemed to threaten blue-collar job security as well as the integrity of working-class neighborhoods. Opposition to federally mandated busing and massive welfare taxation were rampant among Northern blue-collar Catholics, who needed no instruction from Southerners to recognize that their traditional way of life was in danger. By 1968, with George McGovern's embrace of campus flag-burners—not to mention feminist bra-burners—the Democratic abandonment of its traditional base was a *fait accompli*. Into this electoral breach stepped Governor Wallace, achieving significant Northern victories in his 1964, 1968, and 1972 bids for the presidency, flanked by country-music stars such as Tammy Wynette and Webb Pierce.

Country music was a barometer of the changes transforming the American political and social landscape in the 1960's and early 70's. When Merle Haggard recorded "Okie From Muskogee" and "The Fightin' Side of Me" (both in 1969), the response was overwhelming. What Nixon was calling the "Silent Majority" found its anthem in "Okie," for, by then, country music was no longer just hillbilly music; it had been discovered by millions of middle-class Americans as well, hard-working suburbanites for whom the drug-induced excesses of rock music had no appeal. Appalled at the televised spectacle of the "free love" generation running amok on college campuses spewing anti-American hatred, they felt vindicated by Haggard's reactionary anger, just as their resentment of those who refused to work found an outlet in Guy Drake's 1970 hit, "Welfare Cadillac." The swelling ranks of country-music fans also supported the war in Vietnam, if only as a matter of national pride. Arguably, though, they were duped by the so-called domino theory, just as their predecessors had been by the Social Security scam of the 1930's, and duped yet again by Nixon's adoption of the populist rhetoric of Wallace, shorn of its blue-collar bellicosity.



Melanie Anderson

Certainly, after 1968, country-music fans and evangelical Christians have been the core constituency of a Republican populism, which, though it draws upon millions of blue-collar voters, is largely a middle-class phenomenon. This is a cultural and moral, rather than economic, populism combined with a traditional Republican emphasis on deregulation, the "free market," and reductions in Big Government. As readers of *Chronicles* are well aware, however, under the Reagan and Bush administrations, the federal government has continued on an expansionist course, while the evangelical moral agenda has amounted to little more than pious window dressing. Nonetheless, Nashville has been only too happy to supply the soundtrack to this supersized cozening of the American people. The list of Nashville luminaries who have performed at Republican election rallies, or provided endorsements and/or contributions to Republican candidates, is a long one, but includes (just to name a few) Darryl Worley, Tanya Tucker, Sara Evans, Brooks & Dunn, Lee Ann Womack, Travis Tritt, Alabama, Loretta Lynn, Ricky Skaggs, Lee Greenwood, Reba McEntire, George Jones, George Strait, Hank Williams, Jr., and Wynonna Judd. (For the reader who does not follow country music, every singer on this list is a top-drawer country act.)

Endorsements are just the tip of the iceberg. Most of these stars are promoted by a miniscule band of Nashville producers who are themselves, with a few notable exceptions, Republican stalwarts. Moreover, most of the more than 2,000 country-music radio stations nationwide are owned by a few media conglomerates, including Cox Radio, Cumulus, and—the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

most powerful—Clear Channel, which also controls a huge share of the "conservative" talk-radio format (Limbaugh, Beck, and Hannity, among others) and is a well-known contributor of "soft money" to Republican campaign coffers. Clear Channel is widely believed to have conspired with Republican operatives to orchestrate the boycott of the Dixie Chicks after the March 2003 debacle in London, when radio stations from coast to coast refused to provide the Chicks airtime. Little conclusive evidence has emerged either to confirm or deny these persistent claims of behind-the-scenes shenanigans. Clear Channel executives, of course, claim that the stations' DJs acted independently in response to hordes of angry country-music fans who had "spontaneously" risen from their Barcaloungers by the tens of thousands to demand the silencing of Natalie Maines. Well, if you believe that, I've got a piece of oceanfront property in Arizona that might interest you. It is doubtful that Clear Channel DJs have ever acted independently.

With George McGovern's embrace of campus flag-burners—not to mention feminist bra-burners—the Democratic abandonment of its base was a* fait accompli. *Into this electoral breach stepped Governor Wallace, achieving significant Northern victories in his bids for the presidency, flanked by country-music stars such as Tammy Wynette and Webb Pierce

Over the course of many decades, then, populist sentiment has been shamelessly exploited by both wings of the American political duopoly, which, like the vampires they are, require periodic infusions of populist blood to maintain their factitious vitality. What has changed in country music since the 1960's, however, is that Nashville's insatiable appetite for profit and respectability has driven a marketing agenda focused on capturing an ever-larger share of the middle-class consumer demographic. Thus, it has been willing to sacrifice its rural and blue-collar fan base in quest of a more lucrative suburban audience, one far more likely to drive SUVs than pick-up trucks. That this has coincided with GOP electoral strategy since 1968 is, you might say, a happy coincidence for both. Country music's transformation is perhaps best symbolized by the 1974 relocation of the Grand Ole Opry from the hallowed Ryman Auditorium in downtown Nashville to a site adjacent to a theme park, Opryland, just down the road from Andrew Jackson's Hermitage. Before the theme park was shut down in 1997 and rebuilt as a shopping mall, country-music fans and their families could take a cruise on the *General Jackson Showboat* or a wild ride on the Rock and Roller Coaster, stuff themselves silly on corn dogs, then enjoy a show at the new Opry House. There, they could (and still do) listen to performances by traditionalist entertainers, chuckle over folksy Martha White radio commercials, and find themselves reassured by the illusion that country music is still, well, country. Meanwhile, by the mid 90's, the real action was unfolding in huge concert venues and stadiums across the country, where the likes of Garth Brooks and Shania Twain were strutting their stuff before adoring new metropolitan fans who hadn't the faintest idea that what they were listening to was about as country as MTV. And those same neophytes were buying up CDs in numbers that made Nashville record-company executives wet their well-pressed trousers with sheer delight.

Today, the country-music airwaves are dominated by youngsters who grew up listening to the Eagles and Southern rock, and, though they profess their admiration for Hank and George and Loretta, their music is often little more than pop music with a twang—the perfect soundscape for Republican campaign rallies. For the traditionalist who dares to tune in in the hope of hearing an oldie such as Lefty Frizzell's "I Can't Get Over You to Save My Life," there ain't no satisfaction to be had. Instead, he will find that the wailing steel guitars of the past have all been buried beneath a sonic wall of synthesized, guitar-driven, neo-honky-tonk dreck. Of course, there are still some authentic country singers who somehow make the charts. George Strait has, astonishingly since the late 1970's, continued to produce a splendid New Traditionalist country sound. More recently, Lee Ann Womack has proved that honky-tonk angels still cheat. (Listen to her 1998 "I'd Rather Have What We Had," and get your hanky out.) And then there's the young Gretchen Wilson, who sometimes sounds like a girl truck driver jacked up on little white pills, but whose recent duet with Merle Haggard, "Politically Uncorrect," is about as country as it gets. These are exceptions to the Republican rule in Nashville, however, where anything that might upset the soccer moms is generally verboten.

It is likely that, for the foreseeable future, Nashville's low-rent rendezvous with the Republican Party will continue. After all, the party and the producers are stalking the same demographic. But there are some signs of revolt. Back in 2004, a group of Nashville producers and performers formed an organization called the Music Row Democrats and supported the failed Kerry bid for the presidency. Somehow, they were under the impression that Kerry would, if elected, prove to be a more reliable advocate of the concerns of "ordinary Americans" than George W. Bush has proved to be. (Such delusions suggest either rank ignorance or desperation.) Still, there are Democrats in country music—a sizable number, in fact. Emmylou Harris, the queen of traditionalist singers, regularly campaigns for Democratic causes, as does Rodney Crowell, one of Nashville's best songwriters. Willie Nelson, a long-time associate of Jimmy Carter, does his thing for the farmer, while the Bush-obsessed Steve Earle badmouths the Republican "fascists" at every opportunity. (According to Republican speechwriter Mike Long, Earle "was a great musician until he decided to become the pet monkey of the New York cocktail scene.") Toby Keith himself, whose "Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue" (2002) promised to "put a boot" in the posterior of terrorist coddlers, claims to be a lifelong Democrat. But even if Nashville were to sue for D-I-V-O-R-C-E and get herself a blow-dried Democratic bedmate, it's hard to tell whether much would change. c

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In Film, the Political Is the Personal

Time for Your Close-Up

by George McCartney

Melanie Anderson

A reporter once asked Tyrone Power if he thought his next movie would be a hit. "That depends," Power replied, pointing to his face, "on how many close-ups of this make the final cut."

Another case of celebrity vanity? Perhaps, but I prefer to think Power was on to something essential about the nature of film. Take a face, virtually any face, and project it seven-feet high by five-wide on a theater screen, and you instantly confer iconic power on its owner, however ordinary looking—and Power's puss was far from ordinary. But consider a couple of less camera-friendly mugs. No one could have predicted that the face of Robert Mitchum or of Betty Davis would become instantly recognizable staples of our popular culture, but both did. Why? Their indelible close-ups. When it came to the otherworldly beauty of Ava Gardner and Cary Grant, the iconic effect was utterly devastating. Which is especially remarkable, since neither Gardner nor Grant would likely have had a chance in theater. Their thespian range was, to be charitable, limited. On-screen in close-up, however, they were irresistible.

The Tyrone Power anecdote came back to me unsummoned as I began writing on the politics of film. I had been jotting down the usual thoughts that arise whenever film and politics are mentioned in the same breath. Film is a mass medium; it caters to the mass audience. Screenwriters and directors naturally pander to the common man with the usual assortment of left-leaning bromides: Feelings provide a better guide than intellect; wealth corrupts, poverty ennobles; spontaneity trumps planning every time; and, oh yeah, those who belittle the Clintons and admire Eisenhower and Reagan should be taken into the street and shot.

All true, of course, but hardly news. But then Power's face appeared before my mind's eye—in close-up, at that. It set me thinking. What does the close-up mean? Once raised, the question seemed neither odd nor difficult. The answer was obvious. The face filmed in close-up is more than an object of aesthetic contemplation: It is a political statement. Power's face, Davis's face, any face shown that large on a screen impresses us with its unique personal being. Marshall McLuhan famously told us "the medium is the message." The message of the close-up is that individualism must be honored as the inviolable basis of all human truth and beauty. A screenwriter or director might be a communist or fascist or syndicalist; he might fervently believe it right to sacrifice the individual to the needs of the collective; he may want to propagandize in favor of Lenin, Hitler, or a certain former first lady. It doesn't matter. What shines so incandescently from the screen is Power's close-up. Or Streep's, or Redford's, or Clooney's, all highly specific individuals both in the characters they play and in their own persons. The force of the close-up resists any attempt to reduce these performers and their roles to class identities—the worker, the bourgeois, the aristocrat—no matter how politically expedient such a reduction would be.

When they wish to, poets and novelists can emphasize the group over the individual. Think of Leo Tolstoy or John Dos Passos. To a lesser degree, so can playwrights, Anton Chekhov and Bertolt Brecht being obvious examples. Film, however, finds it exceedingly difficult to focus on the village at the expense of the wife, the husband, the child. Or the barber, for that matter.

Movies, despite their content, tend to be formally conservative. To the degree that they use close-ups in their story-telling, they celebrate the individual and the individual's rights. Were there any films that didn't rely on the close-up? I could think of quite a few that emphasized people in groups and formations—they were often those produced in totalitarian states,

---

George McCartney is film editor for Chronicles.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but, even at that, they had plenty of close-ups. The Soviet propaganda film *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and the Nazi *Triumph of the Will* (1934) were made by directors ideologically committed to celebrating the people rather than individuals, but they couldn't do without close-ups—the first, to represent the valiant masses; the second, the valiant leaders. There have been experimental attempts to minimize close-ups—Peter Greenaway's *Prospero's Books* comes hideously to mind—but they inevitably seem strained and awkward. The truth is that directors find close-ups all but indispensable, and, wherever close-ups appear, they undermine attempts to replace the individual protagonist with an heroic collective.

What if Clooney's next film has more to teach us about the rapacity of Americans, the nobility of Middle Eastern sheiks, the decency of communists, the saintliness of Edward R. Murrow? Think of Tyrone Power, and count handsome George's close-ups. If there are enough, relax. It will be the personal, not the political, that viewers remember.

Depending on their politics, directors have found that the close-up's iconic power either hindered or advanced their purposes. Those on the left have struggled to make the close-up fit in with their socialist agenda, while those on the right have enlisted the close-up almost as if it were integral to their traditional argument that government governs best when it governs least. This is unmistakable when we consider films with pronounced political objectives, especially the classics.

Take the mother of all propaganda films, *Battleship Potemkin*, made by the ingenious Soviet director Sergei Eisenstein. Joseph Stalin himself commissioned Eisenstein to celebrate the Bolshevik Revolution on celluloid. The result has been described as a live-action political cartoon, and so it is, albeit one made with dazzling cinematic craft.

Following Marxist doctrine, Eisenstein insisted the working class would be the hero of his film. He chose for his story an historical event, the 1905 *Potemkin* mutiny. His movie dramatizes how the ship's abused crew rose up against their middle-class officers who had, allegedly, been forcing them to serve as though they were slave laborers on a diet of rotting food. Their successful rebellion sparks a revolutionary awakening among the working-class citizens of Odessa, the port into which they sail once gaining control of the ship. The people are then shown sending aid to the ship's crew until, by order of the tsar, the Cossacks march on them, firing at will into the innocent crowd. The citizens flee wildly from the onslaught down the harbor's steps, in a scene that has become one of the most praised and quoted in cinematic history. (Brian De Palma paid amusing homage to it in *The Untouchables*.) Judged aesthetically, the sequence deserves its kudos; judged historically, it is about as factual as the flying monkey attack Dorothy suffers in the *Wizard of Oz*. The Cossacks were trying to quell a murderous riot, and, only after several days did they resort to shooting. But this was nothing like the sustained attack Eisenstein staged on the Odessa Steps.

Eisenstein's purpose was to justify the Bolsheviks' bloody revolution, and that meant truth was secondary to ideology. Despite his artistry as a filmmaker, however, he fails to deliver on his intention. We are supposed to be witnessing class struggle, but what one recalls of the film are the faces in close-up: a sneering officer pushing cowed sailors about; a thick-set, walrus-mustached seaman (astonishingly Stalin-like) encouraging his crewmates to rise up; an old lady pleading with the exterminating Cossacks only to be slashed with a saber across her face. All these images speak more of the pathos of individuals than of classes. These people are irreducibly themselves. The cant leftist formula say that the personal is the political. In film, it is the opposite. The close-up makes the political personal. As a result, the medium tends to subvert the ideologue's attempt to collectivize humanity.

Next, consider the case of Michael Curtiz, a Hungarian émigré who, at Franklin Delano Roosevelt's request, directed two pro-war propaganda films in 1942 and 1943, *Casablanca* and *Mission to Moscow*. Neither achieves its aim.

Mission is an embarrassingly crude piece of work based on former Amb. Joseph E. Davies' equally fatuous book. Both text and film are ludicrous efforts to explain why it was America's duty to support the Soviet Union in its hour of need. Still, the film is not without its entertaining moments. At one point, Davies meets Stalin, who looks for all the world like everyone's dewy-eyed granduncle. Puffing thoughtfully on his meerschaum, Uncle Joe explains to Davies why he made a nonaggression pact with Hitler. It seems he had no choice. No one was willing to come to Mother Russia's aid, and he had to placate the Hunnish hordes. Needless to say, *Mission*'s mission was to convince the American populace that they had no choice, either. Americans had to go kill the krauts, or else the good commies would be up the Volga. This movie is too silly to dwell on except to say that the close-up rule prevails once again. What one remembers most is Stalin's face filling the screen. As played with mannered sincerity by Manart Kippen, he appears to be a man you would have investigated before you'd trust him to mind your pet turtle.

Casablanca is a different matter. It has long been regarded as an American classic. Its mix of romantic longing and bittersweet resignation against a backdrop of international intrigue continues to move viewers today, although I doubt they pay much attention to the story's propaganda payload. Humphrey Bogart plays Rick, the disillusioned cynic determined to sit out the war in Casablanca. He cultivates a studied neutrality in all things political until his former lover, Ilsa (Ingrid Bergman), shows up at his nightclub-*cum*-gambling-den one evening. She is nearly as dewy-eyed as Uncle Joe in *Mission*. What's more, she is delicately wrapped in a velvety soft focus you can't buy at Bergdoff Goodman's cosmetic counter. And then the soundtrack plays "As Time Goes By," courtesy of the wonderful Dooley Wilson. Rick's neutrality naturally founders. Sure, back in Paris, Ilsa had forgotten to tell him she had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been widowed by a man in the Resistance. And, yeah, she had ditched Rick at the Gare du Nord when her hubby suddenly showed up in the pink once more. Nevertheless, she only has to look at Rick with those moist eyes and parted lips, and he is back on duty. He will shoot Nazis by the dozen to help Ilsa and her husband escape Casablanca and return to their work in the Resistance.

I wonder how many in 1942 suspected that Curtiz was feeding them FDR's—and, by extension, Moscow's—line. Bogart must have seemed too honorable, and Bergman, too beautiful, to be indulging in such crass manipulation. Although Curtiz clearly hoped male viewers would leave the theater and go straight to their nearest recruitment center, that is not the film's emotional impact. When Rick takes Ilsa and her husband to the airport to board their plane out of Morocco, she makes a last-minute bid to stay behind with him. She looks up at Rick from under the broadest and most glamorous fedora brim in screen history. Her eyes fill with doubt and yearning. Then, he gives her a wistful smile followed by the big speech that announces the film's *raison d'être*. "Ilsa, I'm no good at being noble, but it doesn't take much to see that the problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world. Someday you'll understand that." She turns, ever so reluctantly, and walks arm-in-arm with her husband toward the fog-shrouded plane. The dialog could not have made matters clearer. The needs of the group far outweigh those of the individual. Sacrifices must be made. (By Hollywood's lights, what could have been a greater sacrifice than to give up an armful of 27-year-old Ingrid Bergman?) The close-ups overpower the words, however. What we are left with is not a call to action but the unforgettable poignancy of the thwarted lovers parting in the mist, their fedoras and belted trench coats declaring their romantic seriousness. Others may amount to a hill of beans, but not these two. They are stars, and they shine eternally against the collective darkness, just as we hope to in our finest democratic dreams.

After the war, Hollywood's ethos changed. With the House Un-American Activities Committee sniffing skunks on the set, antifascist films bowed to anticommunist productions with themes that stressed the rights of the individual in an increasingly regimented world. Science-fiction allegories warning of communist takeover were very big, the best being *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), in which director Don Siegel masterfully created an aura of justifiable paranoia. Using little more than skillful lighting and disturbing camera angles, Siegel translated Jack Finney's interesting but far less intense novel into a gripping story of coerced conformity in small-town America. In Santa Mira, it pays to stay ever vigilant. Nod off for a few moments, and an alien species replaces you with your placid, soulless vegetable double. The plot sounds passé now, but, at the time, it was, if not wholly new, at least not yet shopworn.

One of the film's most remarkable scenes is also its quietest, and it depends on a skillfully framed close-up. The protagonists Miles and Becky have taken refuge from the aliens (read: communists) in his medical office, keeping the lights off so as not to be discovered. Siegel places the actors in front of a drawn shade that glows white in the darkness, evidently lit from the outside by a street lamp. As they stand in front of the shade, Becky wonders how people could be succumbing to the aliens so easily. Miles replies that it is not as strange as she may think. In his practice, he has observed his patients losing their humanity by degrees as they age and become more resigned to life's exigencies. "Only when our humanity is threatened do we recognize how precious it is, as you are to me," he concludes, kissing her. What does this speech have to do with the film's plot? In a word, nothing. But it is perfectly in tune with the film's anticonformity, anticollective theme. This is why Siegel filmed it as he did. By placing his actors against the shade, their heads are sharply etched in profile on its luminous surface. This shot visually emphasizes, as words alone could never do, their irreducible individuality. (Siegel, by the way, always said he was attacking conformists more than communists. Maybe, but since he was married to the communist actress Viveca Lindfors, who had put him through a nasty divorce the year before he made the movie, I'm sticking with the anticommie interpretation.)

Another film of the 50's, Elia Kazan's *On the Waterfront*, also deploys the close-up to convey an anticommunist allegory. Working with novelist Budd Schulberg, Kazan set out to tell how Fr. John Corridan, a Jesuit labor organizer, helped honest longshoremen fight union corruption on the Hoboken docks. Kazan and Schulberg also made this film as an apologia for having testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee about their communist past. They saw in their own experience of having been subjected to communist discipline a strong parallel with the dockworkers' submission to the union code of silence concerning their abused rights.

For its central conceit, the film draws upon the legend of Christ's mantle, the robe the Roman soldiers shot dice for at the Crucifixion. As the garment was passed on from one man to another, so the legend goes, each found himself compelled to stand up for others. So, too, in the film. When dockworker Joey Doyle is killed for agreeing to testify before the waterfront commission about the union's practices, he is pushed off his tenement's roof. After his funeral, his father gives his jacket to Dugan, another longshoreman, who then comes under the influence of Father Barry, the role based on Corridan. Dugan decides he will finish the job Joey had begun, only to be killed in turn. Just before a union goon drops a couple-dozen cases of Irish whiskey on him from a hoist rising out of a ship's hold, Dugan puts a fifth inside his new garment, quipping that he is enjoying the benefit of being a little man in a big jacket. This is the political and moral message of the film. We are each called upon to become bigger than we are, to face challenges, hardships, and evils that seem beyond our ability to handle. What's more, we are required to do so alone, for we cannot rely on others to help us carry our crosses. So, after Dugan's death, the jacket is given to yet another worker, Terry Malloy, who discovers that he, too, must fight the murderous union officials—his former friends, as it happens—on his own. In fact, Father Barry insists he finish the job by himself so he can demonstrate to his fellow workers the power of a single committed man. Malloy redeems his colleagues by standing up to the racketeers. He shows the men that, with courage, they, too, can stand up.

Kazan needed a strong actor to play Malloy, someone who could be believable as a thoughtless thug finally awakened by love and honor to combat injustice. His choice was Marlon Brando, and it is difficult to imagine anyone else in the role, although Frank Sinatra had been considered first. Sinatra, a Hoboken native, may have had the underclass accent and look

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Kazan required, but he wasn't a tenth of the actor Brando was, at least not when Mr. Mumbles was fully engaged in a part.

The young Brando's line readings are as compelling today as when the film was released, especially in his close-up shots. That is where you most notice his habit of looking out past the actor he is talking to as if he were casting in the wind for the words that are always eluding him. Actually, Brando had his lines written on placards and held up by crew members just outside camera range so he could read them while performing. This may seem like self-indulgent laziness; if you watch his performance, however, you will realize it was genius. Rather than making his acting seem awkward as one might suppose, the placarded script makes him seem utterly spontaneous. That is not to say he could not be genuinely spontaneous. Consider that he improvised the better part of a key scene with Eva Marie Saint without knowing in advance he would have to do so. In the park outside Father Barry's church, he talks to Saint, who play's Joey Doyle's sister, Edie. When she drops one of her girlish white knit gloves, an unscripted accident, Saint, as any trained actor would, begins to play through the "mistake," staying in character. She bends to retrieve the glove, but not quite fast enough. Brando gets to it first. Holding it up, he begins to examine it, and then, to Edie's—or perhaps, Saint's—visible annoyance, he pulls it over his own hand. It is an inspired moment—not only because it seems so natural but because it adds such a layer of meaning to the film. This is the moment that Malloy begins to go beyond being physically attracted to Edie. As they talk, he asks her about her attendance at a Catholic college, and she tells him of her aspirations. Having put on her glove, he is entering her world, her vision of what is important, and, above all, her commitment to uncovering the men who took her brother's life.

Brando could not possibly have foreseen the implications of his split-second reaction to the dropped glove. Indeed, it may never have occurred to him afterward. But he had an uncanny grasp of the theatrical moment. This is the reason he so thoroughly impresses his characters upon us. We cannot turn our eyes from him, because he is at once so instinctive and so controlled, so spontaneous and so deliberate. It is the complexity of Brando's performance in this scene, shot in both medium and tight close-up, that makes us believe in Malloy as the individual who finally refuses to stay submerged in the gang ethos of his corrupted working-class colleagues, the man who stands up for himself and, thereby, everyone else.

Kazan had a political message to deliver; Brando gave us much more. He gave us its breathing, personal incarnation, the principle of hope in our lives, both alone and together.

We should take solace in the formal conservatism of film. It means we do not have to risk a stroke getting exercised by George Clooney's next cinematic lecture. What if Clooney's next film has more to teach us about the rapacity of Americans, the nobility of Middle Eastern sheiks, the decency of communists, the saintliness of Edward R. Murrow? Think of Tyrone Power, and count handsome George's close-ups. If there are enough, relax. It will be the personal, not the political, that viewers remember. c

Why the Vikings Rejected America

by John Nixon, Jr.

Scouting the suburbs
Of what was not to become New Scandinavia,
They slaughtered the welcoming committee
(A sorry group),
Used friendly weapons on a few squaws
(Who couldn't, however, compare
With the girls of Dublin and Bordeaux)
And set fire to the town.

Ever try to warm the North Atlantic night
With a dozen flaming wigwams?
That was frustrating enough;
But when they found the local exchequer
Contained nothing but wampum,
They hightailed it, highsailed it back
Across the great pond. All clammed up when
Interrogated by reporters
From *The Stockholm Rune*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Unification Issues in Asia

Rethinking U.S. Policy

by Edward A. Olsen

The United States' strategic policies toward Europe and the regions of Asia—East, South, Southeast, and Central—have often reflected the prevailing cultural ethnocentrism of most Americans, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. For example, Europe and Asia are routinely defined as separate "continents," even though they are obviously parts of the same land mass. Given American concerns about the uncertainties associated with the rise of China as a competitor, Russia's increased geopolitical assertiveness, and the European Union's struggle to develop a pan-national identity, there are growing reasons for the United States to pay careful attention to the balance of power among the different parts of what really is a Eurasian continent. While most Americans are inclined to play their European cards in this strategic game (as they should), a strong argument can be made that the United States should pay more attention to the Asian subregions of the Eurasian continent in order to increase our ability to foster a better balance of power among them. This will, in turn, enhance the United States' position in global affairs.

Since the late 19th century, U.S. foreign and defense policies in the Asia-Pacific region have been dominated by American concerns about regional stability and rivalries. The United States was involved in several major wars—notably, the Spanish-American War (1898) and the Philippine-American War (1899-1902); the Pacific theater of World War II from Pearl Harbor to the atomic-bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the Korean War, from 1950 to its armistice in 1953, followed by decades of armed deterrence; and the Vietnam War. As important as all of these wars were, both when waged and in terms of their legacy for U.S. policy in the Asia-Pacific region, overall, the U.S. role in the region was shaped by the ability of regional states to cope with one another and with external pressures from hegemonic Western powers. These pressures ranged from formal European empires exploiting their colonies to Soviet communists claiming to spread anti-imperial Marxist harmony—and Americans coping with both of these over time in the name of guiding the spread of liberty, democracy, and capitalism.

U.S. policies toward Asia—as well as the policies of the European Union's member states and of Russia toward Asia—have had to contend with the problems caused by territorial frictions. Three places in Asia continuously cope with the problems associated with the division of their formerly united ethnic region. Two of them remain major contentious issues: Korea's division into the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (DPRK); and the two states that are formally identified as China—the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan. The third is the former state of the Indian subcontinent that separated into two major states after the British Empire withdrew in 1947—India and Pakistan (East and West)—and into three states after the two sides of Pakistan waged war, yielding Pakistan and Bangladesh (East Pakistan) in 1971. Today, there is little expectation that the Indian subcontinent will unify as one nation-state. India and Pakistan remain deadlocked over who owns Kashmir.

There is much expectation concerning the peaceful reunification of Korea. This is not to suggest that there is no longer serious concern about the possibility of renewed warfare between the two Koreas, which would likely result in North conquering and absorbing South. Nor have worries disappeared about a North Korean implosion or explosion scenario leading to a weak and vulnerable united Korea. Both Koreas share these worries and desire the means to negotiate a resolution of their problems. If such a resolution becomes more plausible over time, it is likely that the PRC and Russia will try to play a constructive role. Even Japan, hampered by her imperial legacy in Korea and by concerns about what a unified and strong Korea might contemplate doing *vis-à-vis* Japan and Japanese relations with Korea's other neighbors, is pragmatically adjusting to the possibility that a unified Korea may be on the horizon.

Although Washington could and should be doing far more than it is presently to support Korean efforts to reunify, U.S. policy is quietly adjusting to the possibility that the two Koreas may be able to work out their differences. This approach was underscored by a front-page article in the *Wall Street Journal* (July 9) outlining U.S. efforts to encourage the two Koreas to prepare for a formal end of the Korean War to replace the long-standing armistice. The United States has adapted to these circumstances, in part, because the potential for China becoming a *de facto* broker for Korean negotiations is serious—despite Beijing's concerns that a unified Korea could cause problems for China by seeking to reclaim territory in far northeastern China across the Yalu River where an ancient Korean kingdom—Koguryo—had its roots. The more that issue gains traction, the more reason China has to play a constructive role with the two Koreas so that they will become grateful for China's assistance and obligated not to cause post-unification problems for China.

For Beijing to help Seoul and Pyongyang resolve their differences while the PRC and ROC remain divided would be so awkward that it could conceivably yield one of two undesirable

---

Edward A. Olsen is a professor of national-security affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterrey, California, and the author of U.S. National Defense for the Twenty-First Century: The Grand Exit Strategy *(Frank Cass) and* Toward Normalizing U.S.-Korea Relations: In Due Course? *(Lynne Rienner). The views expressed are personal and do not represent those of the U.S. government.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scenarios. In order to avoid embarrassment, Beijing might attempt to stymie the inter-Korean diplomatic processes. Alternatively, it could take forceful actions against Taiwan designed either to compel the ROC to accept absorption into the PRC (perhaps utilizing the paradigm developed to bring Hong Kong and Macao into the PRC) or to get the Taiwanese business community to put political pressure on ROC leaders in Taipei to accept the pragmatic virtues of merging the two dynamic economies. Such a reunified China would be better positioned to facilitate Korea's reunification, but the interim period could be troubling for Korea.

Although a sizeable sector of Taiwan's politicians are resistant to the possibility of Chinese reunification under Beijing's guidance, and some are adamant in their pursuit of Taiwanese independence, such economic pragmatism could yield what analyst Allen Cheng (*Asiaweek*, July 6, 2001) labeled "The United States of China." That Chinese leaders in both Beijing and Taipei would find such a polity desirable is questionable, because of the obvious difficulties of creating a federal organization comprising only two states—states that are very different in size and population. Were the PRC to permit several of its non-Han Chinese and its non-Mandarin-speaking provinces to become either autonomous or quasi-independent, there might be a case for a federated or confederated China capable of persuading Taiwan to join. Given the PRC's growing wealth and power, that scenario is virtually impossible for the foreseeable future.

In this context, and bearing in mind how little the United States has done to promote inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification, it is not surprising that the United States has done even less in terms of being an advocate or facilitator for Chinese reunification. Despite Washington's formal adoption of the "one China" paradigm when it normalized U.S.-PRC relations and eliminated its formal diplomatic recognition of the ROC, our residual defense commitment to the ROC through the Taiwan Relations Act and our extensive economic and social ties to Taiwan clearly put us in an awkward buffer position. Our allies in Asia—especially Japan—are hypercognizant of our difficult position, which only exacerbates Sino-U.S. tensions.

In short, the United States is in a difficult position to cope with China as she tips the balance of power within Asia and between the Asian and European areas of Eurasia. Our handling of South Asian rivalries has not been as difficult, but U.S. efforts to cultivate a level of rapport with both India and Pakistan—using economic ties with India and security ties with Pakistan—have a mixed record. Washington also has to cope with two other major players in Asian affairs. The European Union and its member states are actively engaged with the major economic and political players in all four regions of Asia; so, too, is Russia—especially when it comes to border states or states that formerly were integral to the Soviet Union.

If Washington continues to pursue its existing policies toward these regions, it may or may not succeed—depending upon how the key players perceive U.S. objectives and how well the United States fares in the "War on Terror." Those variables will be influenced by the American public's political responses to the track record our leaders in Washington—in both major parties—establish.

The evolution of the European Economic Community (EEC), the European Community (EC), and the European Union (EU), from 1951 to the present, could serve as a model for each of the Asian regions—or, preferably, all of them combined. Since there already are several free-trade agreements within Asia, these could readily become the foundation for an "Asian Economic Community." The fact that the United States is cultivating free-trade ties in Asia—for example, in Singapore and South Korea—does not mean that a spectrum of Asian countries could not follow Europe's example. Both the United States and the European Union should encourage such innovation.

The United States has reacted negatively to Asian efforts to generate dialogue among subregional or pan-regional groups, when such initiatives exclude countries outside of the groups' territorial boundaries. For example, in December 2005, on the heels of the East Asian Summit held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to which outsiders were not invited, Washington chafed, fearing that such a conference might decrease our extensive involvement in Asia-Pacific regional economic, political, and cultural entities. Yet summits such as this are necessary for the cultivation of what amounts to an Asian Community. They could become the Asian versions of the EEC and EC, *en route* to the European Union—an Asian Economic Community (AEC), an Asian Community (AC), and an Asian Union.

In pursuing such a policy, the United States should play only a reactive supporting role. The advantages to the United States could be enormous, as the evolution of an Asian Union could yield an Asia in which the larger players—China, India, and Japan—would have to strike a balance with one another and with a blended cluster of smaller developed and developing countries. The equilibrium fostered by such a balance would prevent any one or two of the countries from behaving in a hegemonic manner. Those who fear the prospects of a hegemonic Greater China, Japan reviving her militaristic traditions, or religious extremism by Muslims or Hindus would have little reason to worry that a successful transition to an Asian Union could either spawn or tolerate such outcomes.

The United States would also stand to benefit from the new balance of power in Eurasia that would be fostered by the interaction between the European Union and an Asian Union. This would also minimize—if not eliminate—the chances that Russia would be able to reassert herself in former Soviet areas of Central Asia. With the European Union to her west and an Asian Union to her south, Russia would find her ambitions curbed. If current circumstances persist, either union could entice Russia to join one of them—or both could cause rival interest groups in western and eastern Russia to split the Russian Federation, yielding two Russian states. Clearly, the United States should not push that disruptive agenda, but, were it to occur in the future, it would enhance the balance-of-power goals that the United States is pursuing.

All of these broader issues are well beyond the immediate reach of American policymakers, but the United States can—and should—do much more than she is presently doing to help the Koreans and Chinese make progress on their reconciliation and reunification agendas. At a minimum, the United States should offer more verbal and symbolic support. Preferably, Washington should actively facilitate the inter-Korean and inter-Chinese processes and encourage other international players to do the same. Such efforts improve our relations with Korea and China and would help set the stage for more extensive reconciliation on a multilateral level throughout the Asian portions of Eurasia, subtly creating inducements for a harmonious community throughout the greater region.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hitchens' Hubris

by Tom Piatak

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."

—Psalm 14:1

god Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything
by Christopher Hitchens
New York: Twelve Books;
288 pp., $24.99

◆

In July 1941, a political prisoner escaped from Auschwitz. As punishment, ten other prisoners were chosen by the Nazis to be killed in a starvation bunker. One of these men, Franciszek Gajowniczek, began lamenting what his death would mean for his wife and children. Upon hearing these cries, another prisoner, a Franciscan friar named Maksymilian Kolbe—who had run afoul of the Nazis after sheltering refugees, including hundreds of Jews, at his friary—volunteered to take Gajowniczek's place and was sent to the starvation bunker in his stead. In the bunker, Kolbe became the leader of those awaiting death, whom he was often seen consoling and leading in prayers and hymns. Two weeks later, only four of the men were still alive, and Kolbe alone was conscious. The Nazis killed them all; Kolbe was seen calmly giving his arm to the executioner who injected him with carbolic acid. The memory of Kolbe's courage and selflessness lived on in those who survived the Golgotha of Auschwitz, including Franciszek Gajowniczek, and Kolbe was canonized by John Paul II in 1982.

Tom Piatak writes from Cleveland, Ohio. An earlier version of this review appeared on Taki's Top Drawer.

Melanie Anderson

Christopher Hitchens alludes to Kolbe in his careless and dishonest polemic *god [sic] is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. Hitchens, though unable to bring himself to mention Kolbe by name, claims he was virtually the only Catholic hero of the holocaust and dismisses him as "a rather ambivalent priest who . . . had apparently behaved nobly in Auschwitz."

It is not entirely clear why Hitchens believes that Kolbe was only "apparently" heroic at Auschwitz. Perhaps he doubts the testimony of concentration-camp survivors. Maybe he objects to Kolbe because he was celibate and therefore "repulsive" to Hitchens. (So much for Michelangelo and Newton, Handel and Kant.) Hitchens may think Kolbe should have led his compatriots in discussions of Hitchens' own "prophetic moralist," Leon Trotsky, rather than in prayer. Perhaps the problem is Kolbe's ethnicity; after all, Hitchens wrote a column in January 1983 mocking the religious beliefs of Poles at a time the rest of the world was marveling at those beliefs and the way they animated the Poles' resistance to an atheistic dictatorship. Most likely, though, Hitchens' unreasoning hatred of religion simply blinds him to Kolbe's goodness, just as it causes him to ignore the fact that Kolbe's heroism was echoed by the 130 or so other Catholic martyrs of the holocaust so far beatified or canonized, and just as it repeatedly blinds him throughout this book to the role Christianity played in creating Western culture and continues to play in the lives of millions.

Although Hitchens' book is lively and well written, it is fatally marred by its many rhetorical evasions and falsehoods. Throughout the book, whatever Hitchens dislikes he blames on religion, and whatever he likes he credits to something else. A clergyman Hitchens admires, Martin Luther King, Jr., is dismissed as someone who was "[i]n no real . . . sense . . . a Christian." By contrast, Hitchens blames the atheistic dictatorships that killed more people in the 20th century than had been deliberately killed by the state in all the preceding centuries on religion, holding up the Jesuit missions of Paraguay that, until their dissolution, protected the Indian tribes as the first successful instance of totalitarianism and quoting Orwell's remark that "A totalitarian state is in effect a theocracy." What Hitchens ignores is that Christian Europe has produced very

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

few theocracies, because the Church, following Her Founder, has always taught that men should "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." The political legacy of Christianity is thus one of law and liberty, not of unitary despotism and worship of the state. In Hitchens' strange mental universe, religion is to blame for slavery—a primordial human institution abolished in major part by religious men such as William Wilberforce—and the Rwandan genocide, where one Catholic ethnic group slaughtered a different Catholic ethnic group. Hitchens also repeats the communist-inspired lie that Pius XII was "pro-Nazi," citing as his sole authority a book by John Cornwell that has been so thoroughly discredited by serious historians that even its author no longer makes the claim.

Hitchens' dishonesty extends to his own past. He now claims that he was a "guarded admirer" of John Paul II, even though he wrote two columns lambasting John Paul after his death, describing him as "an elderly and querulous celibate, who came too late and who stayed too long," but generously suggesting that he would not face "eternal punishment" for his "errors and crimes" because there is no Hell. Interestingly, Hell is the Christian doctrine that seems to be most attractive to Hitchens. In an interview with the *Atlantic Monthly* about his book, Hitchens chose to repeat this *bon mot* about Mother Teresa that he first delivered on Irish radio: "I wish there was a hell for the bitch to go to."

Neither this book nor Hitchens' crude attacks on the likes of Mother Teresa have dimmed the neoconservatives' ardor for him. The reason is clear: As Peter Robinson wrote on National Review Online, "He may have trouble with God, but Hitch most certainly believes in the war on terror." Indeed. So Michael Novak calls Christopher Hitchens "a Treasure" in NRO's only review of Hitchens' atheist manifesto; former Bush speechwriter Michael Gerson has described the man who calls Mother Teresa a "bitch" as "intellectually courageous and unfailingly kind"; and Jamie Glazov, of David Horowitz's *FrontPage Magazine*, described Hitchens' book as a "very profound and powerful read," a "valuable intellectual gift," and a "powerful moral and humanitarian statement." Establishment conservatives writing about Hitchens' book invariably couple whatever tepid criticisms they offer for Hitchens' blistering attack on the basis of Western civilization with sycophantic bleats about Hitchens' deep intellectual gifts, vast erudition, and sterling character. Thus does the "mainstream" right continue the process of subordinating everything that conservatives have traditionally believed in and fought for to the goal of rescuing the war in Iraq, a war that so far has claimed thousands of American lives, tens of thousands of Iraqi lives, and devastated the ancient Christian community in Iraq—just as *Chronicles* warned it would.

Not that Hitchens is in the habit of shedding tears over devastated Christian communities. Although Hitchens claims in his book not to want to "prohibit" religion, he has long praised its forcible suppression, telling PBS that

> One of Lenin's great achievements . . . is to create a secular Russia. The power of the Russian Orthodox Church, which was an absolute warren of backwardness and evil and superstition, is probably never going to recover from what he did to it.

Of course, what Lenin did to Christianity in Russia was unleash murder and terror. Indeed, Hitchens told *Radar* in April that, if the Christian Right came to power in America, "It wouldn't last very long and would, I hope, lead to civil war, which they will lose, but for which it would be a great pleasure to take part." Even Jacques Berlinerblau, a nonbeliever reviewing Hitchens' book for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, "can't but help detect a whiff of the old Marxist sulfur in the air." Hitchens still clings to his Marxist roots, and the urge to hurry History along—by gulags and firing squads, if necessary—is always there.

The effectiveness of Hitchens' book is also undermined by the large number of errors it contains, many so glaring that they will be picked up by even a casual reader with some knowledge of history and theology. The Gnostic gospels are not of the "same period and provenance" as the canonical Gospels but were written several decades later; the "synoptic" Gospels are not synonymous with the "canonical" Gospels; "Q" is an assumed source for the Gospels of Luke and Matthew, but not for Mark and John; the process of deciding which books to include in the New Testament was not one in which "many a life was horribly lost"; "the Vulgate," which the Reformers were trying to get away from, is not the same as the vulgar tongue; Luther declared "Here I stand, I can do no other" at Worms, not Wittenberg; John Adams was not a slaveholder, nor was T.S. Eliot a Catholic; the amount of wood from relics of the True Cross would not, if gathered together, be sufficient to recreate the Cross, much less create a "thousand-foot cross"; Christians have never practiced animal sacrifice, nor did the Arian heresy teach that the Father and the Son were "two incarnations of the same person"; the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption were promulgated in 1854 and 1950, not 1852 and 1951; the Lateran Treaty was signed seven years after Mussolini marched on Rome, not after he "had barely seized power"; and Maryland never prohibited Protestants from holding office. Given these errors (and many more), there is no reason to accept anything Hitchens writes on his own authority, and he offers no authority other than his own for most of what he writes.

Hitchens' errors extend even to fields in which he claims to be an expert. This self-professed admirer of Evelyn Waugh describes Sebastian Flyte of *Brideshead Revisited* as being "heir to an old Catholic nobility." In fact, Sebastian was the younger son, with little prospect of inheritance, and the Flytes became Catholic only when Lord Marchmain converted to marry his wife. The very paragraph following the one sentence Hitchens quotes from *Brideshead* begins: "Sebastian always heard his mass, which was ill-attended. Brideshead was not an old established centre of Catholicism." The humor in Hitchens' book is similarly unintentional, such as the amusement to be found in reading about Christianity's supposed obsession with sex in a book with page after page discoursing on such topics as the evil of virginity, the horror of circumcision, and "the hideous consequences of the masturbation taboo."

But what of Hitchens' major arguments? Is there a persuasive core buried beneath the errors and falsehoods? Hitchens himself admits there is not. The book eschews philosophical argument in favor of anecdote, a parade of horrible religious extremists for the reader to contemplate. But such argument does not prove that religion is false, or that God does not exist. As Hitchens acknowledges, "I do not say that if I catch a Buddhist priest stealing all the offerings left by the simple folk at his temple, Bud-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dhism is thereby discredited." Exactly. The fact that some horrible things have been done in the name of religion, and that some repulsive men have professed religious belief, does not disprove the existence of God or show religion to be a malign force.

The main arguments that Hitchens offers against Christianity are that evolution explains the origin of life on earth, that portions of the Bible are not literally true, and that the four Gospels are not mathematical reproductions of one another. These arguments do not get Hitchens where he wants to go. Many eminent Christians have seen no contradiction between evolution and their belief. John Paul II stated that evolution was "more than a hypothesis," and Cardinal Newman wrote shortly after the publication of Darwin's work that "Mr. Darwin's theory need not be atheistical, be it true or not; it may simply be suggesting a larger idea of Divine Prescience and skill." Newman also echoed the Thomistic belief that reason and revelation are complementary, not antagonistic, in words all Christians should take to heart:

> [I]f anything seems to be proved by astronomer, or geologist, or chronologist, or antiquarian, or ethnologist, in contradiction to the dogmas of faith, that point will eventually turn out, first, not to be proved, or secondly, not contradictory, or thirdly, not contradictory to any thing really revealed, but to something which has been confused with revelation.

And long before Newman or John Paul, such important figures as Saint Augustine and Saint Jerome looked to the Old Testament not primarily for historical or scientific knowledge but to understand how it pointed the way to Christ. Indeed, Augustine speculated that different species of animals were not the result of separate miraculous acts of creation, as a literal reading of Genesis would suggest, but the result of a process in which the conditions for life created by God gradually became operative.

Hitchens also fails even to mention, much less come to grips with, evidence pointing to the existence of God. He denigrates the analogy of unguided evolution to that of a whirlwind creating a jumbo jet out of the parts found in a junkyard as a "creationist sneer," neglecting to tell his readers that the analogy was made famous by Fred Hoyle, an astrophysicist, who calculated that the odds of certain key life-producing enzymes arising by chance alone were 10 to the negative 40,000th power. Hitchens does not discuss the fact, noted by Robin Collins, that "Almost everything about the basic structure of the universe . . . is balanced on a razor's edge for life to occur." As Collins notes, if the initial explosion of the Big Bang had differed in strength by as little as one part in 10 to the 60th power, the universe would have either quickly collapsed back on itself, or expanded too rapidly for stars to form. If gravity had been stronger or weaker by one part in 10 to the 40th power, stars such as the sun could not exist. As the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* concludes,

> Other things being equal, deliberate, intentional design would constitute a plausible explanation for a universe like ours existing against the odds and out of all the myriad life-precluding or life-hampering universes.

So striking is the suggestion of design that physicists wishing to avoid it have postulated that the known universe is but one of a multitude of universes, which raises problems of its own. As physicist Edward Harrison writes, "Take your choice: blind chance that requires multitudes of universes, or design that requires only one." There is no question which choice William of Ockham, frequently invoked by Hitchens, would take.

Hitchens makes much of the fact that there are differences among the four Gospels. Yet the four Gospels are in substantial agreement on the central facts of Jesus' public ministry. And the differences that do exist are understandable and scarcely suggest that the portrait of Jesus that emerges from the Gospels is unreliable. If four of Hitchens' friends each set about writing a brief biography of him decades after his death, based on their own memories or the memories of others who had known Hitchens, there would no doubt be differences among their accounts, reflecting the different perspectives and memories of the authors. These differences would not show that Hitchens did not exist, or that the biographies were fabrications or unreliable.

In fact, Hitchens inadvertently highlights the credibility of the Gospels. In

THE ESSENTIAL SAM FRANCIS COLLECTION

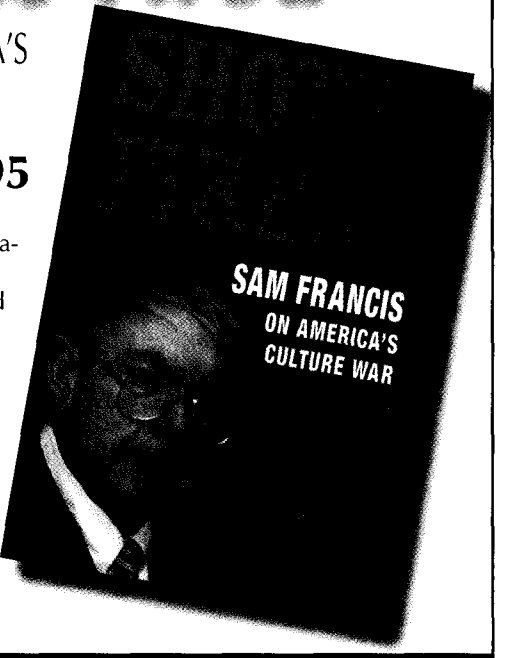
Shots Fired

SAM FRANCIS ON AMERICA'S
CULTURE WAR

320 pages · $23.95

"***Shots Fired*** will provide a new generation of Middle American Radicals with a stockpile of ammunition handloaded by Dr. Francis. His insights into the headlines of the day are so keen that they read as if they were written only yesterday. In page after page, he tips the sacred cows of the self-appointed cultural elites, unmasking the ways in which they seek to legitimize and expand their power by attacking our culture and its symbols."

—Aaron D. Wolf



To order, call (800) 383-0680 or visit www.ChroniclesMagazine.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his book, he recounts the story of Sabbatai Zevi, a 17th-century false messiah who was given a choice of embracing Islam or facing death. Zevi embraced Islam, as "almost any ordinary mammal would have done." But Christ, when faced with a similar choice, embraced the Cross. So did a considerable number of those who had followed Him during His life. The logical explanation for why Jesus and His apostles did not do "what almost any ordinary mammal would have done" is that Jesus believed He was the Son of God, and His apostles came to share that belief. If the Resurrection were a hoax, someone in the know would have confessed to it to save his life. None of them did. Over time, this despised and persecuted sect became the dominant religion of the Roman Empire and then of Europe, eventually creating a civilization that gave rise to the greatest painting, sculpture, music, architecture, and literature the world has ever known. Indeed, many historians of science have concluded that it was the medieval scholastics who gave birth to science, and that the Western empirical scientific tradition could not have arisen apart from Christian belief in the reality of the physical world and the existence of natural laws, and the Christian denial of pantheism.

Hitchens writes that the early conquests of Islam "certainly conveyed an idea of being backed by a divine will." If Hitchens can entertain such thoughts about an alien civilization, why can't he believe that about the far more remarkable story of his own? Indeed, anyone who believes that "religion poisons everything" in the face of Michelangelo and Giotto, Bach and Handel, Chartres and St. Peter's is, as the Psalmist says of those who claim there is no God, a fool.

Hitchens also fails to come to grips with the enduring power of religion. Indeed, he seems to have no conception of how religion has provided meaning, consolation, and inspiration to the great majority of men throughout history, portraying religion solely as the breeding ground of fanatics. Hitchens pretends that there are equally efficacious sources of meaning, consolation, and inspiration, but he is unconvincing. He claims that, "As in all cases, the findings of science are far more awe-inspiring than the rantings of the godly." Is he serious? I doubt that even Hitchens would find reruns of Carl Sagan's *Cosmos* "far more awe-inspiring" than Michelangelo's vision of God creating man.

And what exactly is inspiring about what Hitchens claims to derive from science? Hitchens sees evolution as "callous and cruel . . . and capricious," human life as "random and contingent," and states that "earthly things are all that we have, or are ever going to have." Contrast those "awe-inspiring" statements with the vision offered by Benedict XVI (whom Hitchens has dismissed as a "completely undistinguished human being") in his inaugural homily as Pope: "[W]e are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed. Each of us is loved. Each of us is necessary." Even if Benedict's vision were not true, there is little doubt that it would be more capable of inspiring men than the bleak vision offered by Hitchens.

That bleakness has consequences, even if Christopher Hitchens is unwilling to face them. Although he writes of the consolation provided by art, music, and literature, almost all the artists he mentions in his book were believers of one variety or other. This is hardly an accident: Men sharing Benedict's vision of the world, who see it as an orderly place reflecting God's glory, are likely to produce works of beauty. By contrast, men who believe that life is "random and contingent," the result of a process that was "callous and cruel . . . and capricious," are likely to produce, instead, such painting as Jackson Pollock's, such music as Arnold Schoenberg's, and such architecture as Le Corbusier's. As the American composer John Adams has said, "I learned in college that tonality died somewhere around the time that Nietzsche's God did, and I believed it." In fact, Charles Murray, an agnostic, after his exhaustive study of human achievement, concluded that

> it was the transmutation of [the classical] intellectual foundation by Christianity that gave modern Europe its impetus and that pushed European accomplishment so far ahead of all other cultures around the world.

The vision of the world offered by Hitchens is also far more likely to lead to moral nihilism than that offered by Benedict. If human life is as Hitchens describes it and "earthly things are all that we have, or are ever going to have," why shouldn't human beings emulate the "callous and cruel" process that created them, hang on to their "earthly goods," and look out for Number One? Studies of charitable giving in America have, in fact, consistently shown that those who share Benedict's views are far more likely to give time and money to charity than those who share Hitchens'. A recent study by the Barna Group revealed that religious Americans give seven times as much to charity on a *per capita* basis as nonreligious Americans do. The 25th chapter of Matthew's Gospel is a more effective spur to charity than is Kant's categorical imperative, much less a belief that human life is nothing more than a biological accident. Indeed, although Hitchens does not admit it, widespread charity was unknown in the classical world; it is a legacy of Christianity. And there is no reason to suppose that it would survive and flourish in the atheistic culture Hitchens hopes to create.

Hitchens, for all his malice, is strangely naive: He imagines that we can gleefully tear out the taproot of our civilization and still continue to enjoy its fruits. With his book, he has found a ready audience for this belief among the overschooled but undereducated types who congregate on our East and West coasts and are prepared to defer to anyone with an Oxbridge accent who can readily quote books he has heard of but never read. It is true that the triumph of atheism in the West need not necessarily produce what the triumph of atheism produced in Russia—mass murder and cultural devastation on a scale previously unimagined. But we already have before us cultural devastation of a different sort, the result of the very assault on faith—both faith in God and faith in our past—that Hitchens wants to accelerate: a culture centered on self-gratification, with comfort its highest aim; a high culture devoted to ugliness and degradation, and a mass culture marked by tawdriness and vulgarity; a loss of morals and a coarsening of manners; and the dismissal of notions of duty, self-sacrifice, and restraint as anachronisms, at best, and tools of oppression, at worst. As Waugh wrote, "It is no longer possible, as it was in the time of Gibbon, to accept the benefits of civilization and at the same time deny the supernatural basis on which it rests." It is time to fortify the admittedly thin and tenuous roots still connecting us to Christendom, not to tear them up and hope for the best. No civilization worthy of the name has ever been defined by atheism; we are unlikely to create the first. c

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Last Laugh

by David Middleton

Ironies of Faith: The Laughter at the Heart of Christian Literature
by Anthony Esolen
Wilmington, DE: ISI Books;
412 pp., $28.00

◆

In *Ironies of Faith: The Laughter at the Heart of Christian Literature*, Anthony Esolen argues that Christianity introduced into European literature a new understanding of irony, an understanding found neither in the classical literature of the pre-Christian West nor in the various strains of post-Christian literary theory that infect the academy today. Rejecting self-contradicting and self-devouring notions of irony that lead to relativism or even nihilism, Esolen posits three forms of Christian irony—of time, power, and love.

As Esolen states in the Preface, these ironies depend on

> the Christian mysteries of incarnation and transcendence, free will and design, sin and redemption, blindness and vision, freedom and submission, and, most of all, the subtle strand that links human love to the love that moves the sun and the other stars.

Such ironies, as the reference to the closing lines of Dante's *Divine Comedy* indicates, are dependent on a "disjunction between planes of knowledge"—the difference between what God knows and what we know, a disjunction evident in the placement in Dante's Hell, Purgatory, or Heaven of persons whose earthly status often differed greatly from their place in eternity, and also in the story of the ram that God unexpectedly provides Abraham to sacrifice in place of Isaac. Postmodern irony rests on the statement that all is relative or absurd or indeterminate, which is put forth as an absolute in logical violation of its very claim. Christian irony does not leave us with a world deconstructed into a meaninglessness that consumes yet also rebuts itself. Rather, it discloses a deeper and happier order (worthy of the "laughter" of the book's subtitle). As Esolen says,

> [Christian] irony arises . . . from the ignorance of unseen or unexpected order . . . from the failure to note subtleties, or from seeing subtleties that are not there, especially when the ignorance and the failure are highlighted before observers in a better position to see the truth.

True irony begins in "the humility of wonder," which Esolen finds in authors such as the anonymous "Pearl" poet, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Hopkins, who put God, Creation, and others—not themselves—at the center of their works.

Esolen's survey of examples of the ironies of time, power, and love in European literature is wide ranging. As an illustration of the irony of time, Shakespeare's *Tempest* demonstrates that God governs the desires of evil men and restores the just to power in His own good time. Ending with a harvest dance, *The Tempest* also demonstrates that "For Christians the rhythm of the seasons reflects God's order: it is nature's prayerful office of the year." In Tolkien's story "Leaf, by Niggle," a picture of a tree by a negligible artist, though unfinished, holds within its one finished portion—a leaf—what in eternity is revealed: an image of the entire tree. The leaf also suggests the ancient mythic image of the cosmos as world-tree. Esolen is surely right in saying that we cannot know whether the purportedly great events that make up our chronicles are, in God's eyes, really the most important events in human history. Niggle's leaf, like Blake's grain of sand, contains eternity within itself in a way that whole shelves of naturalistic fiction can never hope to do. What kind of man would Augustine have been, Esolen asks, and what effect, if any, would he have had on Western civilization but for the faith of his mother, Monica?

The irony of power is beautifully examined in Esolen's commentary on Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in which sterile feminist notions of equality and the virtual interchangeability of the sexes are contrasted with the Christian concept of an egalitarianism within a hierarchy of submission—Eve to Adam, and Adam to God—in which the servant-leader, Adam, is charged to lay down his life for Eve if need be, just as Christ as the New Adam would lay down His life for all humanity. Indeed, throughout this book, Esolen reminds us repeatedly of biblical examples of the irony of power, bringing to mind God's use of the younger son, the defeated people, the last faithful prophet, Gideon's band, the flawed man (Moses, David, Peter), and the ironic reversal of expectations—the Messiah born as a helpless Child Who will one day enter Jerusalem not with sword and shield but on the back of an ass, to die as a criminal, on a cross, yet thereby to establish His Kingdom.

The irony of love is shown to inform such works as George Herbert's "Love (III)," in which the poet's soul arrives in Heaven as a patron comes to a tavern, yet not, as the soul expects, to serve Love (Christ) but to be served by Love in the form of a tavern waiter. Spenser's sonnet sequence *Amoretti* reveals the subtle interplay of *eros* and *agape*, or, as Spenser says, addressing the woman he will marry, "So let us loue, deare loue, lyke as we ought, / loue is the lesson which the Lord vs taught." Such redeeming love often comes by way of a child. Examples Esolen considers include Tiny Tim in Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, who transforms Scrooge into a childlike man ("I'm quite a baby") so as to be able to enter the kingdom of heaven by loving others more than money; and, supremely, the daughter who dies at two in "The Pearl." By having the dead child meet her inconsolable father, "The Pearl" brings together all three Christian ironies that Esolen examines, revealing that, from God's perspective, all of time is providentially ordered; that a child, even a dead child, has the power to take her father's grief and make it into an agent for his spiritual rebirth; and that the love of Christ as seen in her will lead the father to desire not a return of his dead child but union with the Christ Child, Who made the daughter and to Whose heavenly bosom the child has been recalled.

Esolen has tried to show "that the teachings of Christianity give to irony a richer constellation of possibilities than the pagan world could have supposed existed." In the end, he believes, "The Christian faith teaches that the last laugh is on the world."

Anthony Esolen's *Ironies of Faith* is a much-needed Christian response to radical contemporary theorists whose corrosive irony can only destroy itself; by teaching us how to read the great works of the Christian imagination, he helps to save them from those who seek their annihilation.

David Middleton is poet in residence and the Alcee Fortier Distinguished Professor at Nicholls State University.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Politics of Laughter

by Christie Davies

Cracking Up: American Humor in a Time of Conflict
by Paul Lewis
Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 224 pp., $25.00

◆

Paul Lewis, a professor of English at Boston College, is one of America's most eminent scholars of humor. With this book, he has written another very thoroughly researched study of contemporary American humor, ranging from the "positive humor" and "laughter club" movements that use humor to promote health and efficiency, peace and uplift, to the "killing humor" of American jokes and comedies that seemingly violate all norms of kindness and restraint.

Lewis is quite rightly skeptical of the claims of the laughter clubs, hospital clowns, and corporate humor consultants who have come to constitute both something approaching a New Age religion and a substantial and prosperous business sector. His detailed review of the now-extensive research literature shows, however, that there is no clear link between humor and health. Likewise, he is able to deflate the claim that humor reduces hostility and makes people feel good by showing that it very often achieves the opposite result.

Lewis's accounts of his personal encounters with the professional humor practitioners are both insightful and wryly funny. The question remains, however: Does it matter that these people are fakes? The positive-humor movement neither leads patients to ignore more effective cures (as homeopathy sometimes does), nor can it inflict direct harm on patients (as psychoanalysis often does). No one takes "positive humor" seriously as an intellectual program in the way that many do the vacuous and unverifiable propositions of Freud and company.

The same point applies in relation to Lewis's fascinating and detailed account of the "killing jokes" of the 1980's and 90's about famines and dead babies, the killing of lawyers and therapists, and the amusement drawn from the lives of such murderers as Jeffrey Dahmer and O.J. Simpson. Lewis links this humor to the social theories of that archliberal Baron Giddens of Southgate, which claim that we are all in a state of anxiety and denial about impending environmental catastrophe. Has Lewis forgotten the letters written by Walter Sickert when pretending to be Jack the Ripper, the *Ruthless Rhymes* of Harry Graham, the savage songs of British soldiers in the trenches, American jokes from the 1920's about lynching, and the American Horror Comics of the 50's, which were morbid in exactly the same way and popular long before Lord Giddens' meditations on global doom?

The joke wars detailed in this book are a distinctively American phenomenon in which individuals who make jokes to which the members of a targeted group object are then made the subject of recrimination and harassment. In 1995, four Cornell freshmen sent out by e-mail "75 reasons why women should not have freedom of speech," which later escaped to wider dissemination on the internet. America's massed feminist harpies went berserk, the students were sent death threats, and attempts were made to get Cornell to discipline them. May a foreigner wonder why identity politics and the politics of emotion are so strong in the United States? Why does anger politics work so well in America? Or more to the point, why is some people's anger taken more seriously than others'? Why is it "correct" to be indignant about jokes putting down homosexuals or blacks, whereas jokes about pedophile priests can circulate unmolested? What does this tell us about who really exercises power in America?

Let us look at two examples that Lewis provides. The first is an hilarious cartoon by Robert Grossman, published in 2005, called "Babe Lincoln," which followed the publication of a book suggesting that Abraham Lincoln was attracted to men and shared beds with them. The cartoon shows a large-breasted, wide-hipped Lincoln in women's clothing and top hat and beard, wielding an ax onstage, ready to split an imagined trunk into fence rails. The cartoon is a winner for its sheer incongruity. There were, however, immediate protests following its publication, saying that the cartoon confused homosexual men, transvestites, and transsexuals and was, thus, grossly insulting to the neatly business-suited, body-building "gay community." Yet it would not have surprised me at all to have seen a queer, bearded lumberjack in drag going down Main Street, California, on a float in a gay-pride parade. *Quid rides?*

We may contrast this situation with the response to jokes about priests having sex with altar boys—jokes Lewis records as circulating among his students in the 1980's. Such jesting, if taken seriously, could be viewed as a malicious undermining of the moral authority of the priesthood and the meaning of the confessional. Only a small minority of priests are pedophiles, in exactly the same sense that only a small minority of black men are rapists. Liberals ought to argue that such jokes about priests are wrong because they unfairly indict an entire group. Why is it, then, that I cannot hear their protests? Lewis's take on this joke is an interesting one. He suggests that such humor could make the seduction of choirboys appear an ordinary, laughable, and—by implication—acceptable event, which could, in turn, make it easier for the hierarchy to tolerate and conceal priestly pedophilia.

These two radically different interpretations prove that jokes do not have clear meanings. They are meant to be ambiguous and incongruous; that is what makes them funny. This, in turn, undermines liberal claims that jokes influence people's opinions and dispositions. Lewis outlines at length the available research on this point, and it is clear to me, if not entirely to him, that there is very little support for the idea that jokes have any measurable effect on people's psyches.

At this point, Lewis, who is something of a liberal, suggests that jokes are a different kind of political snare, used to induce us to like and trust good-humored politicians such as Ronald Reagan; they are therefore a "distortion of and detraction from rational reflection." Maybe so, but is this not how all image politics, or indeed the "presentation of self," works? In his cozy fireside chats, Franklin Roosevelt lulled people into forgetting that he and his advisors (some of whom were, according to recently released KGB files, dangerous Soviet agents) were, against Churchill's better judgment, handing over Eastern Europe to communist slavery. FDR's carefully constructed geniality concealed a policy whose consequences were unspeakably cruel. Only under hard-joking Reagan was Eastern Europe freed, and only amiable George W. Bush has had the courage to denounce the blunders of the aging, ailing, possibly senile Roosevelt as "one of the greatest wrongs of history."

A sense of humor and an ability to use

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

humor are undoubtedly an asset to any democratic politician, but they are just as likely to be associated with vision, rationality, and success as with their opposites. Intellectuals may well choose to rely on "rational reflection" alone, but it is precisely this habit of mind that has led to their attachment to ideologies that have the appearance of rationality, merely because they are systematic. Perhaps it is better to muddle through with jokes.

Christie Davies is the author of The Mirth of Nations *(Transaction).*

The Bombast and Glory of William Jennings Bryan

by Mark Tooley

A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan
by Michael Kazin
New York: Anchor; 432 pp., $16.95

◆

For three decades, William Jennings Bryan streaked across the sky of American politics, his brightness never fading despite countless failures. Renowned for his zealous Christian faith, he appropriately expired immediately after his final and most glorious defeat, at the Scopes Monkey Trial in 1925.

In *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan*, author and Georgetown history professor Michael Kazin argues that Bryan, despite his three failed presidential campaigns, successfully and permanently transformed the Democratic Party into a progressive one. Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt may have won elections that Bryan had spectacularly lost. But their electoral success, and their liberal policies, would have been impossible, according to Kazin, absent Bryan's exertions.

Kazin laments that liberals and good Democrats never credit Bryan for his achievements, much less claim him as their ideological icon. The first 30 years of Bryan's political career are rarely remembered, except for his masterful "Cross of Gold" speech to the 1896 Democratic Convention. (The oratorical debut of The Great Commoner drove delegates to tears and spasmodic dancing in the aisles.) Instead, Bryan is largely recalled as a buffoonish fundamentalist who bumbled his way through the Scopes Trial, unsuccessfully defending the Bible against evolutionism and pitting his supposedly bigoted, Southern yahoo allies against educated urban elites. The Democratic Party used to be full of Southern yahoos. But now Democrats, or at least their leaders, are drawn almost exclusively from educated urban elites, who see Bryan as more a Red State caricature than an ideological father.

Biographies of Bryan have been few: Most Americans know him through *Inherit the Wind*, the fictionalized account of the Scopes Trial that first appeared on Broadway in 1955. Fredric March portrayed the Bryan character in the 1960 movie version, with Spencer Tracy as Bryan's courtroom nemesis, based on Clarence Darrow, and Gene Kelly as a fictionalized H.L. Mencken, whose mocking reportage about Bryan condemned the once-revered orator to 80 years of disrepute. But Bryan deserved far better than his treatment in *Inherit the Wind*. Of the three personalities who were central to the courtroom drama and the media coverage of it, Bryan was the most noble and likeable character, whatever his politics and theology. By contrast, Darrow and Mencken, for all their brilliance, were cynical and often nasty. Unlike Bryan, both were often contemptuous of democracy and regular people.

Though he held political views that were harshly polemical and often outlandish, Bryan seems to have lived without acrimony. More impressively, despite his repeated electoral disasters, he never succumbed to bitterness: His faith insisted that defeat and suffering were central to the Christian life. Bryan was reared by a Baptist father and a Methodist mother in Salem, Illinois. With his father's permission, he joined the Cumberland Presbyterian Church as an adolescent after attending a tent meeting. Although later generations would deride him as a fundamentalist, he was, in fact, broadly ecumenical, urging full social inclusion for Catholics and Jews. His Christianity, although remaining theologically orthodox, was strongly guided by the rising Social Gospel of the late 19th century.

As a young lawyer, Bryan worked for and was mentored by Lyman Trumbull, the former Illinois senator who had run against Abraham Lincoln in 1854. Although Lincoln had more votes in the state legislature, he feared a pro-slavery candidate would ultimately win unless he stepped aside in favor of Trumbull. Impressed and grateful, Trumbull enthusiastically supported Lincoln's subsequent campaigns. In his own political trajectory, Trumbull went from Democrat to Republican to Democrat again.

Bryan was from a solidly Democratic family and never wavered in his political affiliation. He moved to Lincoln, Nebraska, to practice law and raise his family. Then, at age 28, when he campaigned for Grover Cleveland and other Democrats (1888), Bryan discovered his magnetic appeal to audiences. Besides having a voice that had both sonority and volume, Bryan rejected the baroque phrase-making of 19th-century speeches in favor of simple talk. "I have more than usual power as a speaker . . . God grant that I may use it wisely," he told his wife. In 1890, Bryan won election to Congress from a very Republican state.

Grover Cleveland was reelected to the presidency in 1892, but his second term was overshadowed by a national depression. A staunch conservative, Cleveland refused to expand government powers, liberalize the money supply, or tolerate railroad strikers, whom he suppressed with federal troops. Bryan unveiled his oratorical magic before his congressional colleagues by rhapsodizing about the glories of silver currency against the more restrictive gold standard. He ended his two terms in Congress to run unsuccessfully for the Senate in 1894. Although he won the popular ballot, he lost in the Nebraska legislature and never served in elective office again.

Bryan became editor of the *Omaha World-Herald* and put himself on the agenda of the 1896 Democratic Convention, which was divided between pro-Cleveland conservatives and pro-silver progressives. "The humblest citizen in all the land, when clad in the armor of a righteous cause, is stronger than all the hosts of error," Bryan declared. "I come to speak to you in defense of a cause as holy as the cause of liberty—the cause of humanity." Claiming support from the "producing masses of this nation," Bryan melodramatically concluded: "You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold." He then stepped back from the podium and stretched out his arms. The crowd was at first silent, then exploded with frenzied excitement. Bryan was nominated as his party's candidate for the presidency

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at the age of 36.

Shunning the tradition that presidential candidates not openly campaign, Bryan relentlessly crisscrossed the nation by train, in this first of three national presidential campaigns. Meanwhile, the avuncular Republican candidate, William McKinley, more quietly received visitors on his front porch. McKinley won election with 51 percent of the vote and 271 electoral votes to Bryan's 176. The Democrat swept the South and the West, but the Republican took the Northeast, where urban laborers could not identify with the Great Commoner from the Midwest. Interestingly, most churchgoers and clergy in the North, including the famed evangelist Dwight L. Moody, opposed Bryan; to many of them, his rhetoric was blasphemous.

For the next 30 years, Bryan would remain a political gadfly, running for but never holding elected office. He served briefly in the Spanish-American War but vigorously opposed a U.S. empire comprising liberated Cuba and the Philippines. Later, Bryan became a functional pacifist. His rhetoric moved to the left, at one point alarming even his allies when he urged nationalization of the railroads, an idea he later shelved. Still, Democrats could not resist Bryan's hypnotic appeal, and he was their candidate against McKinley again in the 1900 election. This time, he lost by a wide margin.

The Democrats reverted to an obscure conservative candidate in 1904 but listened to their heart once more in 1908 by pitting Bryan against William Howard Taft, who won easily. Bryan remained steadfast. Unable to resist the adoration of the crowds, he spoke to any respectable group willing to pay $500. He was the first American politician routinely to receive hundreds of thousands of letters. He published a regular newsletter for his supporters, while maintaining his journalistic post at the *Omaha World-Herald*.

Though Woodrow Wilson viewed Bryan condescendingly, he could not ignore his party's elder statesman, and so Bryan became Wilson's secretary of state in 1913. The Great Commoner did not succumb to any pretensions in his new role, appearing regularly at the State Department unshaven and in old suits. To the horror of the more refined, he also maintained his vigorous speech-making on the Chautauqua circuit, sometimes sharing the stage with jugglers, acrobats, and magicians.

Despite his repeated political defeats, Bryan remained an enormously popular orator and storyteller, dispensing folksy wisdom and a populist Christianity. He did not compromise his core convictions, however. While Wilson worked behind the scenes to thrust the United States into World War I, Bryan worked publicly and privately to honor the President's promise to keep us out of it. Finally, to Wilson's relief, Bryan resigned from the Cabinet.

Bryan was uncomfortable with power, with all its responsibilities and compromises. He preferred the high rhetoric, idealism, and acclaim of speech-making and campaigns. He also enjoyed the prosperity that his speakers' fees brought him and his family. The Great Commoner lived well, but not ostentatiously. He devoted himself to charities and church work, fighting the increasing theological liberalism that plagued his Presbyterian denomination.

Despite his lofty populist aspirations, Bryan was never very interested in the plight of segregated black Americans. His private conversation and letters avoided racial epithets, and he seems to have been free of any personal racial animosity. Yet he unquestioningly accepted the racial mores of his time. Bryan also knew that the Democratic Party could not win a national election without the segregated South. He raised no objection when the Wilson administration resegregated the federal workforce. And, at the 1924 Democratic Convention, Bryan opposed a platform resolution that would have condemned the Ku Klux Klan. Why should "the Catholic Church, with its legacy of martyr's blood and . . . its long line of missionaries," or the Jews, who "have Moses . . . and Elijah . . . , need a great party to protect [them] from a million Klansmen?" Bryan asked the delegates. "It requires more courage to fight the Republican Party than to fight the KKK—more courage to save a nation than to throw a brick." Bryan carried the day in what was his last address before a Democratic Convention, but it was an unfortunate note on which to end his political career.

Bryan's final performance occurred in Dayton, Tennessee, in a drama that was almost wholly contrived. The city fathers wanted the publicity, and the American Civil Liberties Union wanted a test case for Tennessee's prohibition against teaching evolution in the public schools. Bryan saw the defense of the Tennessee law as an act on behalf of populist democracy. He also regarded the philosophical and ethical implications of Darwinism as insidious and especially threatening to the weakest members of society. Naturally, he offered his services to the prosecution, even as the agnostic celebrity lawyer Clarence Darrow offered himself for the defense of the young football coach, John Scopes, who had volunteered for the part of the fall guy in the show trial.

Darrow lost the trial but won in the court of public opinion by summoning Bryan as an expert witness to defend biblical literalism. Bryan was unprepared and surprisingly inarticulate. He had prepared a masterful summation argument. But the clever Darrow, well aware of Bryan's oratorical power, outwitted his rival by declining to give his own summation, therefore denying Bryan his chance at gaining a courtroom pulpit. H.L. Mencken ridiculed Bryan at the trial as the "idol of all Morondom," with "peculiar imbecilities" and full of "theological bilge." Bryan died in his sleep before he could leave Dayton, thus giving Mencken the last word.

Kazin has attempted to redeem Bryan's reputation. The author, a nonreligious liberal, admits that he does not share Bryan's brand of evangelical Christianity. And he laments Bryan's failures on racial issues. But he hails his unflagging populism, which decisively made the Democrats the liberal party, in opposition to the conservative Republican one. Kazin does not really explain why the socially conservative states that once voted for Bryan now vote Republican, and *vice versa*. He describes Bryan, accurately, as a big-government, Social Gospel evangelical and suggests that he might be a role model for today's religionists of the left, such as Jim Wallis. But Kazin does not understand that such leftists today, however religious, have more in common with Clarence Darrow than with Bryan.

He does, however, recognize in Bryan an American original, lofty in character, enormous in personality, tireless in pursuit of his causes. Bryan can quite rightly be admired even by those who remain grateful that he lost every bid he made for the presidency.

Mark Tooley is the director of the United Methodist Committee (UMAction) of the Institute on Religion and Democracy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by Philip Jenkins

Egypt's Momentous Event

Every American knows that Egypt is an overwhelmingly Muslim country, by far the most populous Arab Muslim state. Many Americans, on consideration, might also be aware that, before the arrival of Islam, Egypt was just as solidly Christian, the cultural and spiritual heart of the early Church. How did one situation give way to the other?

Although Egypt's Christians had been subject to previous outbreaks of persecution, these events now reached an alarming new intensity. Mobs demanded that Christians and Jews recite the Muslim profession of faith upon threat of being burned alive. The government struck at churches and confiscated the estates of monasteries, destroying the financial basis of the Coptic Church. And the persecution now reached the whole country, rather than being confined to Cairo. Under increasingly violent conditions, many Christians accepted Islam, in a massive wave of conversions. Muslim historian Al-Maqrizi reports the unprecedented scale of the change:

> Many reports came from both Upper and Lower Egypt of Copts being converted to Islam, frequenting mosques and memorizing the Quran . . . In all the provinces of Egypt, both north and south, no church remained that had not been razed; on many of those sites, mosques were constructed. For when the Christians' affliction grew great and their incomes small, they decided to embrace Islam. Thus Islam spread among the Christians of Egypt and in the town of Qalyub alone 450 persons were converted to Islam in a single day. . . . [T]his was a momentous event in Egyptian history.

These events occurred in 1354, at a time when Europe was entering the early Renaissance, decades after the time of Dante, and, more to the point, 700 years after the initial Arab conquest of Egypt.

In light of popular constructions of history, the Egyptian story seems multiply wrong, in terms both of the chronology or religious change and, more particularly, of its manner. Partly, we suffer from the curse of oversimple maps. As any number of textbooks and television documentaries tell us, Islam rapidly extended its power over the Middle East, in a movement symbolized as a fast-spreading stain. The maps imply that conversion to Islam was a swift and painless process: Presumably, infidels rapidly came to acknowledge the superior virtues of Islam.

The notion of an easy, amiable conversion fits well with the many recent books that stress the tolerant nature of Islam and its reluctance to impose its beliefs by force. Karen Armstrong famously contrasts Muslim tolerance with the bigotry so evident in Christian history. Writing of Islamic Spain in the ninth century, she remarks that, "Like the Jews, Christians were allowed full religious liberty within the Islamic empire and most Spaniards were proud to belong to such an advanced culture, light years ahead of the rest of Europe." The notion of Islamic tolerance is often associated with idealized pictures of the friendly coexistence that supposedly prevailed in medieval Spain, the *convivencia*.

Coexistence in some times and places does not preclude persecution in others, however. Much as Christian Europe treated its Jewish population, good social relationships between Muslims and Christians could endure for decades or even centuries. But in the world of Islam as in Europe, persecution, when it did arise, could be savage, devastating the minority community, and, in both cases, the 14th century witnessed a crescendo of violence and discrimination. Even in the most optimistic view, Armstrong's reference to Christians possessing "full religious liberty" in Muslim Spain or elsewhere beggars belief.

Undeniably, many Christians and others (Jews and Zoroastrians) were driven to accept the new faith, whether by outright persecution or systematic discrimination, exercised over centuries. Nor did Christianity simply fade away of its own accord, following a centuries-long downward slope to oblivion. Across the Christian worlds of Africa and Asia, the 12th and 13th centuries marked a widespread cultural renaissance in many lands and many tongues, movements that produced some of the greatest thinkers and authors of the Christian Middle Ages, dazzling Syriac scholars such as Bar-Hebraeus and Jacob Bar Salibi. Only around 1300 did the ax fall, and quite suddenly.

So extensive, indeed, were persecutions and reductions of minority groups that it is astonishing how little they have registered in Western consciousness, or how readily the myth of Muslim tolerance has been accepted. One factor distorting memory has been the total oblivion into which the non-European Christian communities have fallen, coupled with the assumption that the familiar realities of the present day must always have existed. For those accustomed to a near-solidly Muslim Middle East, it seems incredible that a different situation might ever have existed, or, if it did, that it could ever have experienced a different outcome. And such a vision has contemporary relevance: If we know nothing of Middle Eastern Christians, we care little for their welfare: hence, the moral blindness in U.S. policy toward the region over the past century.

To stress intolerance in Islamic history does not mean that we must abandon one mindless stereotype—universal *convivencia*—and replace it with another image, that of ceaseless violence and persecution. Anyone who believes that boundless aggression and ruthless tyranny over minorities are built into the DNA of Islam needs to explain the quite benevolent nature of Muslim rule during its first six centuries; but advocates of Islamic tolerance must work equally hard to account for the later years of the religion's historical experience. Though Muslim regimes could tolerate other faiths for long periods, that willingness to live and let live did fail at various times, and, at some critical points, it collapsed utterly. The deeply rooted Christianity of Africa and Asia did not simply fade away: It was crushed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by Scott P. Richert

The New Math: 66 < 60

How much would you pay for a library card? In Rockford, if you are not a resident, you have to pay $140 per year for the privilege of using the Rockford Public Library system. With six branches scattered throughout the city and over 400,000 volumes, most avid readers who aren't relying on the library for scholarly research would get their money's worth in a few months.

But what if you had to pay $4,197.24? And what if the cost of your library card were based on the assessed value of your house, so that, in all likelihood, it would rise every year?

That's what one homeowner in Bradley Heights/Larchmont will have to pay if the city of Rockford succeeds in annexing the neighborhood—and that's in addition to the actual tax levy for the library, which will amount to another $580.50 (approximately). Meanwhile, the 94 property owners in Bradley Heights/Larchmont will pay an average of $1,124.11 over the next year (as well as the actual tax levy) for the privilege of being able to check out the latest Dan Brown novel. That's the difference between the taxes they would have paid if their neighborhood had remained an unincorporated area in Winnebago County (with a 2006 property-tax rate of 8.189 percent) instead of being forced into the city of Rockford (with a 2007 property-tax rate of 10.4709 percent), according to a spreadsheet put together by Bradley Heights resident Betsy Easton. (The tax rates are applied to equalized assessed value, which, in Illinois, is one third of market value.)

Now, to be fair, the city's legal director, Patrick Hayes, in a form letter sent to Mrs. Easton and all other property owners in the Bradley Heights/Larchmont neighborhood, made it clear that

> Becoming a resident of the City of Rockford has several benefits and services, including full-time police and fire protection, ambulance and paramedic service from the Rockford Fire Department; maintenance and repair of streets and snowplowing of local streets by the Rockford Department of Public Works; and a free Rockford Public Library card.

For an average of a little over $1,100 per year, these services might make for an attractive package, if the residents of Bradley Heights/Larchmont weren't already receiving them from Winnebago County or Rockford Township—all, that is, except for the Rockford Public Library card.

Not surprisingly, the vast majority of residents of the neighborhood have been strongly opposed to the city's gracious offer to provide them with "free" library cards against their will. Patrick Hayes argues that the neighborhood is "eligible for annexation into the City of Rockford under Illinois State Law based on the fact that [it] is less than 60 acres and surrounded by the City." Bradley Heights/Larchmont is indeed surrounded by the city of Rockford on all sides, and the Illinois Municipal Code does state that

> Whenever any unincorporated territory containing 60 acres or less, is wholly bounded by (a) one or more municipalities, . . . (d) one or more municipalities and property owned by the State of Illinois, except highway right-of-way owned in fee by the State, . . . that territory may be annexed by any municipality by which it is bounded in whole or in part, by the passage of an ordinance to that effect after notice is given . . .

There's a third detail to be considered, however: Is the territory of Bradley Heights/Larchmont really "less than 60 acres"? That, it appears, depends on who is doing the measuring, and with what purpose in mind.

Both the residents of Bradley Heights/Larchmont and Hayes agree that the neighborhood covers approximately 66 acres. And, under normal circumstances, 66 would be greater than 60. But with more than a million dollars in tax revenue over the next decade at stake, the city went looking for a way to make 66 be less than 60.

And, Hayes contends, they found it in a July 28, 2006, ruling from the Second District Appellate Court of Illinois. In that case, the city of West Chicago annexed a parcel of 62.75 acres by claiming that the area occupied by Route 64 (a highway owned by the state) should be excluded from the total. That brought it down to 57 acres and made it eligible for annexation. The appellate court sided with the city of West Chicago, pointing out that the Illinois Municipal Code requires a municipality annexing a parcel bounded by a state highway to annex the highway as well, "to prevent any question regarding jurisdiction, maintenance, financing, and traffic control once the annexation has taken place."

That decision, Hayes argues, applies to the annexation of Bradley Heights/Larchmont by Rockford. Anyone who looks at a map of the area, however, cannot help but notice what would seem a salient fact: There are no state highways bounding the neighborhood. Nor, for that matter, are there any state highways running through the neighborhood. The nearest state highway lies to the west of the neighborhood, running through property already claimed by the city of Rockford.

Still, the functionaries at the city, well trained in the New Math in the Rockford public schools, did a few quick calculations and determined that the size of the neighborhood is really 56 acres. How did they arrive at that number? Simple: Hayes told them to remove all streets and rights-of-way from the total.

Problem solved. Now the 94 poor, benighted property owners in Bradley Heights/Larchmont can enjoy their "free" library cards! Those who had previously paid the $140 fee to obtain a card can now apply it to their $1,100 property-tax increase instead! It's a win-win situation!

And I've got a state highway to sell you.

When Rockford Mayor Larry Morris-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sey, who appointed Hayes, was elected, many of us hoped that we would see a change in business as usual down at City Hall. But Hayes notified the residents of Bradley Heights/Larchmont a mere six weeks before the annexation was scheduled to occur and, from the first correspondence, spoke of it not as a possibility but as a done deal. Jim Easton, Betsy's husband, said that Hayes told residents that he understood their concerns, but annexation is in the best interests of the *current* residents of the city, so the city intends to exercise its legal right.

Often, when municipalities annex new developments, the corresponding increase in tax revenue is exceeded by the increase in expenditure on infrastructure and public services. But an established neighborhood such as this, which already has city sewer, its own independent water system, all the roads it needs, and only a handful of scattered lots without houses, is a ripe plum ready for the picking. Most of the increased property taxes paid by the Eastons and their neighbors will go to subsidize other neighborhoods elsewhere in the city—for instance, future developments annexed at a net loss.

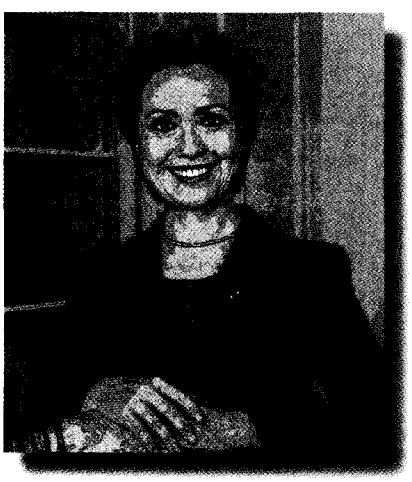
The neighborhood is fighting the annexation in court, and, with so much tax money on the table, neither side is likely to settle for defeat. Thus, the case will probably end up before the Illinois Supreme Court a few years down the road. On the face of it, the appeals-court decision on which the city's action rests is actually fairly restrained, concerned primarily with determining the original intent of the legislature. For instance, in referring to another case, the court notes that it "involved a private railroad right-of-way as opposed to a public highway" and argues that it does not apply because "the remaining sections of the Code failed to make any allusion to railroad lands as distinguished from other types of property." Since the same appeals court will eventually hear the Bradley Heights/Larchmont case, that may be good news for the property owners, since township roads are clearly not state highways, nor are they mentioned in the section of the Illinois Municipal Code governing annexation.

Who will likely prevail? I have no idea. The daily newspaper, on the other hand, has already ruled for the city, declaring in an unsigned editorial that "A recent court ruling evaporated [the neighborhood's] safety zone because it said streets and rights of way do not have to be included in the total acreage." Either all the members of the *Rockford Register Star*'s editorial board suffer from a strange form of dyslexia that causes them to read "township road" wherever "state highway" appears, or they are taking their cues from Patrick Hayes. Neither prospect should give much comfort to those who long for a free and independent local press.

There are larger issues at stake here as well. In our post-*Kelo* world, municipalities have every reason to believe that they are the ultimate owners of all land within their borders. Depending on the outcome of the Bradley Heights/Larchmont case, they may have reason to believe that they hold similar title to all land that touches their borders. It doesn't take a great stretch of the imagination to conceive of a situation in which a giant corporation known for its practice of leveling forests and fields to plant a big-box store in the center of a 60-acre parking lot might approach a city with a plan to annex a neighborhood, raze it, and hand the property over for redevelopment. All it would take to convince the city—and the courts—is to prove that the increase in sales-tax revenue would be even greater than the increase in property-tax revenue.

The Lords of Bentonville must be lying awake at night in anticipation. c

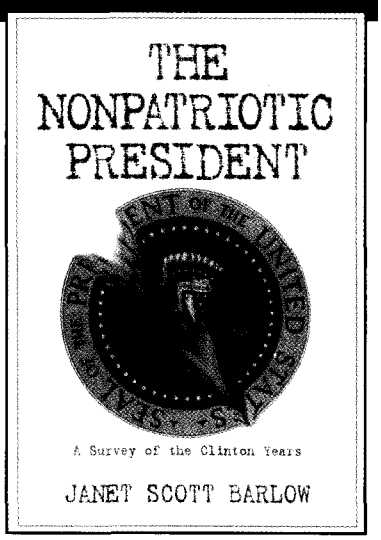
What is the true cultural significance of the Clinton presidency?
What could we expect from a second President Clinton?



The Nonpatriotic President

A Survey of the Clinton Years

by Janet Scott Barlow



The Nonpatriotic President features 20 hard-hitting chapters, including "My Nixon," "Communication as Manipulation," "Hillaryland," "It's About Sex," "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," and "The Politics of Arrogance."

Softcover Price: $15.95 ($12.95 plus $3.00 s/h each)
Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.

- send check or money order to 928 N. Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103
- call (800) 383-0680 to order with MasterCard, Visa, Amex, Discover
- purchase online at the webstore on *ChroniclesMagazine.org*

NONP

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Letter To Mitt Romney

by Jack Trotter

Imagination Deficit

◆

Dear Mr. Romney:

In spite of the Herculean labors of their spin doctors, politicians on the stump often say stupid things in the heat of the moment, and you are probably right to resent the unfairness of journalists who exaggerate the importance of such mundane stupidities. But rarely are politicians' unconsidered remarks so remarkably unconsidered as your own attempt, in a *60 Minutes* interview this summer, to distance yourself from the polygamous practices of your Mormon ancestors. When questioned on the issue by Mike Wallace, you stated,

> I have a great-great grandfather. They were trying to build a generation out there in the desert. And so he took additional wives, as he was told to do. And I must admit, I can't imagine anything more awful than polygamy.

In the interest of fair play, Mr. Romney, I will extend to you the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps you have in your possession some old letters passed down to you, or a diary, maybe, in which your great-great-grandfather reveals that he entered into polygamous relations (polygynous, strictly speaking) only because he was instructed to, presumably by Mormon religious authorities. You implied that he had no choice, that he "took additional wives" reluctantly. Perhaps that is true, but, the masculine nature being what it is, what sort of a man, Mr. Romney, would only reluctantly accept a guilt-free opportunity to bed as many women as he could reasonably feed and clothe? I hope you will forgive me for suggesting that, by all appearances, you were merely engaging in standard evasive maneuvers—admitting, on the one hand, that your ancestors were polygamists, while suggesting, on the other, that their marital practices can't really be held against them because their volition was not fully exercised. You, however, appear to be fully volitional and possessed of at least normal intelligence. Thus, you have only yourself to blame for the astonishing inanity you uttered in the final sentence of the above-quoted passage. It's worth an instant replay: "I can't imagine anything more awful than polygamy."

Forgive my impertinence, Mr. Romney, but if you can't imagine anything more awful than polygamy, then you have led a more sheltered life than one would have thought possible, even for a Mormon. Or, you are suffering from an imagination deficit that would make Paris Hilton blush. Or (and this seems more likely), you are engaging in an ill-considered piece of rhetorical sleight of hand, trading on the dubious assumption that most Americans regard polygamists with the same abhorrence they reserve for serial killers, child molesters, and nicotine addicts.

Allow me, Mr. Romney, to offer some discreet advice. You've grasped the wrong end of the stick! If you really want to reside on Pennsylvania Avenue, you're going to have to face facts. First of all, in case you haven't noticed, the popularity of monogamous marriages like your own is in steep decline. Most Americans now prefer serial monogamy. Some sociologists call this serial polygamy, and, indeed, the terminology is apt. Is there really a great difference between being married to three women in succession and three women simultaneously? Second, Americans are increasingly tolerant of all sorts of marital arrangements. Look at our beloved Vice President, Dick Cheney, the proud grandfather of a baby conceived by his daughter and an anonymous sperm donor. Samuel David (fine Old Testament names!), as the child is called, will reside with his two mommies, Mary Cheney and former park ranger Heather Poe, who describe their relationship as a "marriage." Far from being nonplussed, Mr. Cheney has gone on record as saying that people "ought to be free to enter into any kind of relationship they want to." Apparently, millions of Americans agree. Yes, it's true that conservatives in a number of states have recently voted for constitutional amendments banning homosexual "marriage," but would they object with the same righteous vehemence to a movement to legalize polygamy?

Somehow, Mr. Romney, I think not. On the contrary, most Americans haven't the slightest idea why polygamy is illegal in the first place. Collar the nearest man in the street and ask him. He will shrug and admit ignorance. If he happens to be a sincere Christian, he may tell you that it's a sin. But where in the Bible is polygamy condemned? Clearly not in the Old Testament, which speaks of the polygamy of the Jewish patriarchs with nary a word of disapprobation. It's true, to be sure, that Adam and Eve were a strictly monogamous couple, but, as one of your own apologists has noted, Adam couldn't spare another rib! Nor is the practice condemned in the New Testament, though admittedly Christ and Saint Paul both strongly endorse monogamy. But didn't Joseph Smith himself have more wives than he could possibly have kept satisfied? Frankly, you Mormons really aren't very consistent on this point. Is the *Book of Mormon* divine revelation, or isn't it? Or is the 1878 Supreme Court decision outlawing polygamy (*Reynolds* v. *United States*) now regarded by Mormons as yet another divine revelation, one that supersedes the endorsement of "plural marriage" given in the Book of Jacob (2:30)?

Believe me, Mr. Romney, if you want to be elected president, you're going to need more than "Ken doll" good looks. Nor can you count on the fundamentalist vote. Their electoral force is rapidly on the wane—at least for the moment—and, besides, many of them do not regard you Mormons as *bona fide* Christians (and they may have a point there). What you need is some serious branding, something to distinguish you from the pack. That's why I would suggest that you drop this antipolygamy rap and embrace your heritage! You've probably been too busy campaigning to watch much television, so you may not have noticed that polygamy is going mainstream these days. HBO's *Big Love*, now entering its second successful prime-time season, features a well-mannered, middle-class polygamist, his three wives, and their seven children. Bill Hendrickson, the dapper "patriarch" of the family and the owner of a home-supplies store, is really just an updated, if somewhat harassed, version of Ward

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Cleaver: a loving father and husband struggling to keep his rather large brood safe and well fed, and his wives content (with a little help from Viagra, which I'm sure your great-great-grandfather would have appreciated).

In short, polygamy is making a comeback, Mr. Romney, and you are splendidly positioned to ride the "plural marriage" wave all the way to the White House, especially since polygamy, properly understood and packaged, is perfectly consistent with your social conservatism. Consider the societal benefits. As you know, divorce rates in America have risen to catastrophic levels since the 1960's. Nearly everyone—a few diehard feminists notwithstanding—recognizes the deplorable fallout associated with this state of affairs. As I am sure you would agree, the American family is facing an unprecedented crisis, and polygamy may be the ideal solution. In the first place, polygamy obviates one of the most common reasons for divorce: male promiscuity. Once upon a time, men—especially middle-aged men—had "affairs," but rarely did their straying lead to divorce. Divorce was too difficult (and too expensive!), and the social stigma, too burdensome. Now, in the era of "no-fault" divorce, men are free to abandon their aging wives at the drop of a hat and throw themselves into the arms of the nearest tattooed tart on offer. In a plural marriage, however, there is no need to abandon anyone. Masculine vanity and lust may be equally satisfied by simply adding another, presumably younger, wife to the fold.

Speaking of younger women, as the sociologists have informed us, and as the statistics show, the male-to-female demographic these days is a bit lopsided. Women outnumber men in substantial numbers. Millions of single women are still searching for husbands well into their 30's and 40's. It is no exaggeration to say that their situation is desperate. You may recall the advice proffered by the Fruitcake Lady to a forty-something lass who asked how she might find a husband: "Get yourself a good dog." Well, I have no doubt that a good dog is probably a more affectionate companion than the average American male, but the solution is not ideal. For these millions of lonely women, polygamy may be the best hope. Of course, many of them may be reluctant to share their mate with several "sister-wives," but now that the baleful influence of feminism is waning, women are beginning to realize once again that what they really want, more than anything else, are security and intimacy.

Lastly, Mr. Romney, polygamy is a states' rights issue, and states' rights is, as you must know, a sacred cause to millions of traditional conservatives and their paleolibertarian fellow travelers. With them, I urge you to take your stand on firm constitutional ground. Historically, the states have regulated marriage. Your very own state of Massachusetts has recently conferred legitimacy upon "gay marriages," and had every right to do so, just as my state of South Carolina has every right to pass a constitutional amendment banning such unnatural unions. In 1878, the majority in *Reynolds* v. *United States* ruled that polygamous unions were illegal because they were "subversive of good order," but clearly they were (and are) nothing of the kind. On the contrary, in hundreds of societies throughout history, polygamy has been the very foundation of good order. It is time to restore to polygamy its good name!

Think of it: By raising the battle flag of states' rights and plural marriage, you not only will distinguish yourself as a man with a message, but you will attract an enormously diverse constituency: traditional conservatives and libertarians, women, "gay-rights" advocates, Muslims, and many old-fashioned liberals—not to mention your own coreligionists, many of whom must secretly long for a way of life consistent with their founder's beliefs. Yes, I understand that you may be reluctant to seem wishy-washy on this issue, but there is an easy solution to that problem. Simply announce, at a judiciously chosen moment, that you have been granted a new revelation! Remember that Fortune always grants her favors to the bold!

Jack Trotter writes from Charleston, South Carolina.

Letter From Punxsutawney

by Greg Kaza

The Slavic League

◆

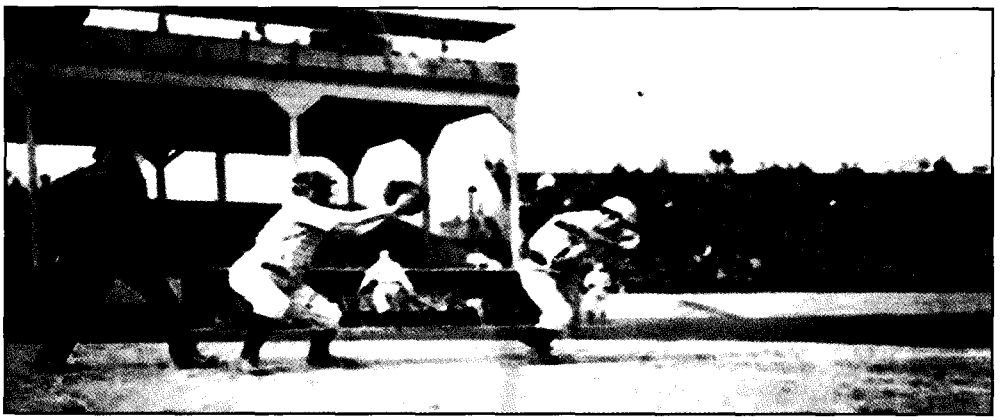
For as long as young Villem could remember, hunkeys had occupied the lowest rung in Punxsutawney's social pecking order. The Italians had their various business enterprises; the Irish had their legions of bishops, monsignors, and priests; and the Slavs were miners known by the pejorative *hunkey*. Vil's father, Juraj Oddany, dug coal, as did two older brothers who quit school after the eighth grade to help feed the family's 14 mouths. It was a hard life—physically demanding, yet a far cry from the old country's coercive Magyarization. Life in America was full of simple pleasures—like the Slovak Club on Number Five Hill, with its fine wood bar and shuffleboard in the basement; groundhog hunts; and baseball.

The story of how Vil came to play for the townie team, the Punxy Electrics, is brief. He and his friends spent their summers playing pickup games in a grassy lot on Five, calling themselves the Aggies. It was tradition in the small mining towns of Western Pennsylvania for the mine super to offer a job to a family if a son was skilled at baseball. Vil was just another "dumb hunkey" to the townies. But he was a good ballplayer, and that was good enough for the Electrics, a team with its own legacy to defend. In the mid-1930's, the Electrics defeated the Pittsburgh Pirates, a major-league team whose roster featured Paul "Big Poison" and Lloyd "Little Poison" Waner, both of whom would later be enshrined at Cooperstown. The Slovak Club's Old Slavs chalked it up to the Pirates underestimating the effects of the slivovitza served at the pregame banquet on Mahoning Street. Townies insisted it was "local talent." Whatever the cause, the Pirates, egos bruised, were seeking a rematch. This game would be played at Punxy's Main Field under the lights.

The circumstances surrounding Vil's entry into the Slavic League are more complicated. Vil thought it ridiculous to name a baseball team for buccaneers wearing eyepatches. He was a Detroit Tigers fan, through and through. Vil prided himself on his "Tiger eye." He was a right-handed, spray-hitting shortstop known among opposing pitchers as "hard to pitch around." Some tried to intimidate him. Vil, to their chagrin, always responded by digging in deeper, and closer, to the plate.

Vil bore insults quietly, secure in the knowledge that he, not the pitchers, won most of these duels. Dueling continued off the field, the physical assaults changing with the seasons. In winter and early spring, it was snowballs and chunks of ice. Easter produced a truce. In summer and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



fall, it was coke from the beehives (small ovens) that dotted Punxy's woods. The play was always hit-and-run: the verbal insult ("dumb hunkey") followed by the attempted physical assault and, finally, flight. As his tormentors fled, Vil thought of the groundhogs the Oddany men dispatched with the family rifle. Then he paused, crossed himself, and recalled the Old Slavs' adage: "It's hard to keep a good hunkey down when he gets up after ducking!" Vil, like his ancestors, had learned this lesson a long time ago.

It came to pass that the Pirates got their rematch, and, in the bottom of the ninth, they led the Electrics, who had two on and two out, 5-4. The Slovak Club's Old Slavs still argue over what transpired next. Some contend that Fuzzy Terwilliger, the Electrics' top hitter, did not see the splinter before he sat on the dugout bench after the eighth inning. Others insist Terwilliger was just plain cowardly, having struck out at his last three at-bats. Yet others saw Providence in Electrics manager Seamus Martini's decision to pinch-hit Young Vil, the team's only Slav, with the game—and town honor—hanging in the balance. It should not be forgotten that skeptics of this final theory will note that Martini had already played the entire team and had no one else to send to the plate in Terwilliger's place.

Vil was barely 18, and, as he stepped up to the plate, many unfriendly eyes focused on him. His father and older brothers were working the night shift. His mother and sisters, as hard as they had tried, never understood the mathematical intricacies of the game. Of course, his younger brothers, Jahnko and Tomas, were no doubt praying for him in the bleachers instead of playing stickball in the lighted parking lot across from Ss. Cosmas and Damian. Vil dug in as the hecklers screamed, "Dumb hunkey!"

There is unanimity of opinion about what transpired next. Vil later insisted he was nervous, being the youngest on the team. Besides, he was not used to playing under Main Field's lights. The Old Slavs knew better. Martika Krivosky waved, and Vil, for once, forgot to duck. The Pirates' pitcher snickered; the catcher feigned sympathy; the women, led by Martika Krivosky, cried; and the parish priest was summoned to administer the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. Vil's body lay motionless in the chalk. His soul hovered above home plate, and he felt his life passing away. Suddenly, a figure appeared. At first, he thought it might be Saint Peter. But the first Pope had never worn the Detroit Tigers' Olde English *D*. Why, it was Barney McCosky, Vil thought—the young, left-hitting Detroit outfielder from Coal Run, Pennsylvania, who hit .340 with 200 hits and 19 triples the previous year when the Tigers won the American League. Other ballplayers stood in the shadows, and Vil heard Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, and other Slavic tongues, including Slovak, spoken.

"You have to watch those curves if you want to play in the Slavic League," said a voice from the shadows.

There was laughter. "Never mind them," Barney McCosky told Vil. "It's not your time." He spoke with conviction. "We'll be waiting for you when it is." The crowd fell silent as Vil picked himself up to face the Pirates, knowing for the first time in his young life that *his* team was bigger than any nine from Punxy or Pittsburgh.

The Irish and Italians inside local establishments like Grazier's and Del-a-Monte's still talk about Young Vil's clutch hit that spring night, as do the Slovak Club's Old Slavs when they meet to throw down a slivovitza.

It's hard to keep a good Slav down.

Greg Kaza writes from Arkansas.

Letter From New York City

by Jerry Salyer

Living Communally

◆

At first, our taxi driver asserts that the United States will surely triumph overseas—thanks to the teams of dedicated, patriotic geniuses who diligently work in the field of American foreign policy.

On second thought, he wryly reflects, the Soviet Union employed teams of geniuses, too.

At least, that's what my wife tells me he said; I speak no Russian, so I could not understand a single word of the ex-Red Army sergeant's reflections upon his experiences in the Afghan War. I doubt the irony is lost on the immigrant cabbie, however: The government of the country in which he now lives is struggling to put down the same forces that it once kindled against him and his comrades-in-arms.

Personal, familial commitments have forced me to put aside my instinctive distaste for New York City, and so my wife and I are staying for the week with relations of hers in "Little Odessa"—the heavily Slavic section of Brighton Beach, in Brooklyn. The trip is not without its redeeming factors: If I must be in a megalopolis, I would much rather stay in more earthy ethnic neighborhoods—actual, working neighborhoods—of Russians and Eastern Europeans than in, say, a trendy, upwardly mobile, and vanilla-cosmopolitan sector.

Another taxi cuts in front of us, and the sergeant-cabbie vents his frustration. "I have no problem working with Africans or Puerto Ricans or Chinese," he explains, "but a woman has no place driving a cab."

Later, my wife and I explore downtown Manhattan—for which some Indians were once given a few cheap, gaudy, shiny beads that pretty much sum up the existential worth of the place to this day. As we make our way through the crowds, I feel drained. This is not just a melodramatic effect of a vivid imagination or "the sensitive artist": New York City repels me, and I am startled (and somewhat relieved) by the vehemence of the repulsion. Whatever temptations are dangerous to my soul, the prospect of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

living a Sarah Jessica Parker lifestyle isn't one of them.

This nothing-zone glistens with the stylish sheen of utterly superficial sophistication. I am reminded of something Doc Wilson once told me—that those of no substance try to give their lives meaning by identifying with power. That's what all the billboards and subway advertisements for Citibank MasterCards, for Club Med, for law school are about: the naked, servile adoration of power.

And there is its totem, the Empire State Building, one of the Seven Wonders of the Modern World, secularized Western Man's revisioning of misanthropic Buddhist paintings in which Nature is depicted in waterfalls and forests and mountains—all dwarfing a few tiny, insignificant human figures. It is a warped sort of mysticism that seeks to drown humanity in infinity. Constructed in the midst of the Great Depression, the building proved as useful for those seeking to commit suicide as the art-deco spire proved utterly useless as a docking port for airships. The impersonal god Progress drives an absurd bargain—and it shows in the temples erected by its devotees.

We find a different sort of adoration on Archbishop Fulton Sheen Place—East 43d Street—at the Church of St. Agnes. We are also pleased to discover that we have made it in time for Confession. St. Agnes, as it turns out, is a very solid parish with a Tridentine Mass, and (wonder of wonders) the priests there operate on the premise that offering absolution frequently and regularly is part of their job description.

It is a humble-sized church, sitting right down the street from the towering U.N. Headquarters—an outpost of Christendom enduring under the shadow of an Hegelian monolith.

The subject of the homily is Saint Benedict, patron of Europe, whose feast day it is. I wonder what the good saint would prescribe *vis-à-vis* the neobarbarism of our time—a barbarism of quite a different order from that which accompanied the decay of the Roman Empire, a barbarism that extols barbarism for its own sake, as a matter of principle.

As bad as Roman decadence must have been, only in the postmodern West would an attempt to define the words with which we try to communicate be seen as oppressive. And only under Americanism would a man be dubbed a bigot—deemed *evil*—for preferring a deep knowledge of his own inheritance over a shallow dabbling in someone else's.

The Mass concludes, and we go forth to serve the Lord—darting through a curtain of suddenly torrential rain to reach the sheltering scaffolding that leads to Grand Central Station. We dive underground with the mob to catch the shuddering subway back to Brighton Beach.

My wife does some shuddering of her own—she is of a sensitive temperament, and being submersed in a sea of troglodyte-lemmings in the New York City subway does not agree with her. Later on, it reminds her of the underground lair of H.G. Wells' Morlocks from *The Time Machine*. Why would people live like this?

I agree with her, of course—except that, in the real-world megalopolis, one frequently finds the brute viciousness of a Morlock and the infantile, technology-dependent helplessness of an Eloi manifested in one and the same person.

The next day, we hit the beach at Brighton. My wife loves the ocean—the rhythm of the waves, the invigorating saltwater, the seaweed that is washed ashore and picked up by middle-aged Russian women and plastered on their skin for its nutritive value. I have a slightly different take, recalling late-night watches on the red-lit bridges of warships cruising off the coastlines of various countries, the smell of land mingled with the flavor of cheap U.S. Navy coffee. I spy the occasional big merchant vessel steaming by, out in the traffic lanes, and feel a twinge of nostalgia.

After a cold swim, we head out to do some shopping—vodka and caviar for my brother and his wife, bird's-milk candies for my wife's family. At a bookstore, we acquire a work of Nikolai Berdyaev for my wife's library. I have had a fascination with Berdyaev for some time. He was a Russian Orthodox existentialist whose better writings emphasize personality and the personal as essential to Christianity; he strove, with mixed success, to develop a Christian theory of creativity.

"The secret of the existence of personality lies in its absolute irreplaceability, its happening but once, its uniqueness, its incomparableness," Berdyaev wrote. Yet personality is communal; it presupposes communion with others, and community with others. For Berdyaev, the profound contradiction and difficulty of human life is the result of this communality.

Whatever else he may have got wrong, he hit the mark on this point. Scrutinizing Little Odessa, one can gain an entirely different perspective on the predominant errors of American intellectual thought. This place is best seen not as a corner of America filled with immigrants but as a Slavic colony, an extension of the collective nation of Russia—which, like all nations, is not entirely defined by geography, and even less so by the fleeting fads of particular political systems and ideologies.

A nation is not a contrived set of regulations and statutes and institutions but a personality. A nation is a people.

People, as in small-scale entrepreneurs who place Orthodox icons next to their cash registers; *people*, as in clusters of housewives and widowers leisurely sitting in lawn chairs in front of their apartment buildings, talking, arguing, reading copies of *A Walk Through the History of France in the Time of Napoleon*. *People*, as in muscular, one-legged Afghan vets crutching their way around Brighton Beach.

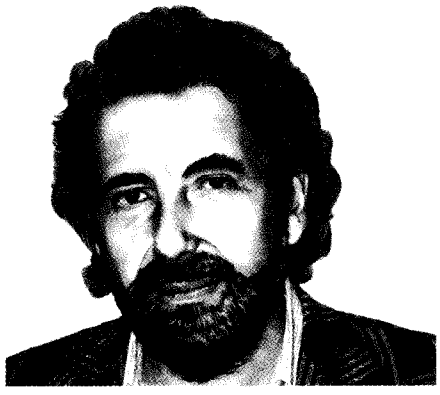
I am happy to be loading up the car for our return home to the Bluegrass State. I am even enthusiastic about meeting the mad traffic that stands athwart our exit from the Big Apple. Like the merchies cruising up and down the shore, we bear cargo—both purchases and experiences. Brighton Beach has given me a tiny taste of the Russian world of today, going beyond ideas constructed in my imagination from readings of Berdyaev, of Gogol and Turgenev and the rest; and the danger of mistaking my sporadic study for a deep knowledge of a land and its folk has become clearer to me. Dostoyevsky is great, but he would warn us that reading is no substitute for living. Condi Rice, I'm told, has claimed *The Brothers Karamazov* as her favorite book.

Jerry Salyer writes from Kentucky.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by Andrei Navrozov

The Fig Leaf



All one can ever imagine of Eve is the fig leaf, but the whole issue is more universal, and at the same time somehow more prickly, than any isolated contretemps in the Legoland of the senses. Say "glutton," and in your mind's eye you'll see a mutton joint being brandished by some Rabelaisian hand; say "hunter," and you'll see a shotgun and the obligatory hat; say "courtesan," and you'll see a dressing table, a vase of bonbons, the lamp in the window. Try saying "beloved," then. As in "my beloved." What is it that you see? Wait, don't tell me. Just give me a minute, and I'll try to imagine it for myself.

Imagination builds, it constructs, it designs and redesigns. It is unstoppable as commerce, pervasive as advertising. It is also dirty, like politics, and shady, like business. In Lower Binfield, the Oxfordshire town where the protagonist of Orwell's *Coming Up for Air* lives as a child, his father's poultry-feed trade is ruined when a slick competitor, a big retail chain called Sarazins, sets up shop down the road. It springs up like a figment of some baleful imagination, an alien and unappeasable phantom, claiming its share of reality as though by draconian right. Before long the price of fodder is undercut, while the family's psychological response—calling to mind the resigned stupefaction, relieved by occasional cattiness, of a circle of female acquaintances before a resplendent newcomer with a surgically enhanced bosom—epitomizes the popular attitude to big business outlined and presaged by Marx in *Capital*. "Bright green paint, gilt lettering, gardening tools painted red and green," reminisces Orwell's protagonist with a shudder of epochal tristesse. How unfair it all is, how sordid.

Cheap fodder! True, the word *cheap*, when applied to a woman, still retains the negative connotations that are nowadays decidedly out of place in any commercial context, but this, quite clearly, is an anachronism, an obsolescent convention, a tired prejudice hanging in there by the skin of its chemically bleached teeth. In a truly brave, truly new world, there ought not to be room for such squeamishness, for if silicone breasts are not immoral as a way of undercutting the competition, how can the long-standing practice of price slashing raise any permanently blackened eyebrows? No, in the truly brave, truly new world there ought not to be lines drawn in the sand.

"Oh, please, I don't want a cheap woman," says the man who has been asked to imagine his beloved, as he clutches to the last shred of oldie-worldie morality. How pathetic he is, this hunchbacked Rigoletto, in his childlike obstinacy! How like the proprietor of a corner shop on the verge of financial ruin, who grumbles that he will go this far and no further, not even if it means hiring an assassin to do away with the profligate Duke! *Questa o quella*, imagination's brave new world seems to be ululating all round him, I can get any woman I want, take her, steal her, buy her, have her, and have her again; and how sane, how robust, how thoroughly rational and logical, is this line of reasoning, when at last confronted with his own set of musty old notions, at once fragmentary, inconsistent, and ever so laughably outmoded.

Let me answer him. "So, a resounding *yes* to purplish lipstick, and *yes* to the way she keeps brushing back that loose strand of blonde hair—by the way, it takes three-and-a-half hours for her colorist to get it to just the shade you're in love with, a monthly ordeal that costs more than a nurse's weekly wages, and very bad for the hair, too—and also a tentative *yes* to her having rather enjoyed Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, but a firm *no* to liposuction and other invasive procedures, *no* to looking cheap, and *no* to seeing the Colombian who says he's a film producer on Tuesday afternoons between the hours of four and seven? You really are an old fuddy-duddy, you know.

"Once in the world there existed the concept of inalienable properties, or features, such as the length of a nose, the color of eyes, an hereditary title, a hunting estate in the Black Forest. Or the concept of property in general, upon the immutability of which political economists, Adam Smith for instance, relied in their writings as they came up with novel ways of rationalizing it. Then Marx came along, and explained that all economic property was but a figment of class imagination, that the mirage could be wished away in a blinking of an eye, that just as feudal landlords' idea of property has been supplanted by the mill owners' or the bankers', so too will this, more progressive, idea vanish with them once progress has razed their satanic mills and banks to the ground.

"And now you turn round and say *no* to progress. You protest that you want this woman for what you imagine to be her inalienable properties, like the fashionable tint of Chanel lipstick she uses, and that you love her for what, in your tawdry little conservative mind, are her immutable features, like the smell of peroxide in her hair, without once stopping to reflect that progress is another name for inexorable, escalating, eventually totalitarian alienation, indeed that the whole woman exists in your imagination as tenuously, as conditionally, as private property exists in the world pictured by Marx. You are playing at Lego all right, just like the feudal landowners and the commercial bankers of yesteryear, picking and choosing which building blocks of reality to breathe life into, and some of the blocks are spurned as being off-limits, taboo, against nature. In the end you will end up like your predecessors, swept away by the rising tide of totalitarian consciousness, by the futurism that is quite immune to such scruples and will crush a child as easily as it crushes the child's toy."

A Modern Prometheus was the evocative subtitle with which Mary Shelley had supplied her tale of Frankenstein. According to the testimony of Marx's daughter Eleanor, Prometheus was the political thinker's favorite hero, while his favorite work of literature was Goethe's *Faust*. If anything, emotion is even more nakedly a politically incubated creature than I make it out to be in this euhemerizing rendition of a private mythology. C

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by Srdja Trifkovic

A Divided Subcontinent

A 31-gun salute boomed at daybreak on August 14 in Islamabad to mark Pakistan's 60th anniversary of independence from British rule—or, to be precise, her birth as a Muslim state that resulted from the bloody partition of India in 1947. That event was accompanied by the largest mass migration in history, as over ten million people crossed the new borders fleeing for their lives; up to a million never made it.

This year's celebrations lacked the festive spirit that marked the 50th anniversary a decade ago. They came after months of political unrest and religiously inspired violence. With almost daily suicide bombings since the army's bloody siege of the Red Mosque in Islamabad last July, President Pervez Musharraf appeared almost somber as he addressed the nation. "Pakistan has come a long way since Independence," he told Pakistan's estimated 165 million people.

In a sense, Musharraf is right: All countries in the world have "come a long way" over the past six decades, for better or worse. South Korea and Southern Rhodesia of 1947 are equally unrecognizable today. In comparison to her perennial rival India, however, Pakistan is lagging behind. She is politically less stable, institutionally less democratic, and economically less prosperous. More importantly, she is ideologically far less attuned to Western values and modes of thought than she was at the time of her birth.

The notion of "Pakistan"—"the Land of the Pure"—as the homeland and state for the Muslims of India was based on the two-nation concept of the Muslim League, founded at Dhaka in 1906. A decade later, a brilliant and suave British-educated lawyer, Mohamed Ali Jinnah, became its leader. Jinnah only joined the League in 1913, having started his political career as an Indian nationalist and an advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity. Between the wars, however, he grew apprehensive that the Muslim identity would be threatened in a secular state based on the British model of parliamentary democracy, as soon-to-be independent India was envisaged by the Congress Party of Gandhi and Nehru. By 1940, the demand for the creation of a separate political entity of "Pakistan" had been formally endorsed by the Muslim League.

Seven years later, with the hasty departure of the British, Pakistan came into being as the first modern state to be established on openly Islamic principles. As V.S. Naipaul wrote on the 50th anniversary of the partition,

> Muslim insecurity led to the call for the creation of Pakistan. It went at the same time with an idea of old glory, of the invaders sweeping down from the northwest and looting the temples of Hindustan and imposing faith on the infidel. The fantasy still lives: and for the Muslim converts of the subcontinent it is the start of their neurosis, because in this fantasy the convert forgets who or what he is and becomes the violator.

While defined by religion, even though many of her citizens had not thus defined themselves until that time, Pakistan, Jinnah nevertheless claimed, could develop as a democracy with equal rights for all. His death only one year after independence marked the end of that vision, however. His successors—many of them coarse military types steeped in Naipaul's "fantasy"—have tended to derive their inspiration from Mecca, rather than Westminster.

Unlike India, Pakistan has never been a stable, functional democracy. She has allowed discrimination against Christians and other religious minorities (after all, only the "Pure"—*i.e.*, Muslims—are her true citizens), and she surreptitiously aids and abets Islamic terrorists in Kashmir and the Taliban in Afghanistan. The suicide attacks in London on July 7, 2005, masterminded by a young British-born Pakistani, and the long list of proved or suspected Pakistani links with other terrorist attacks in recent years, reflect the country's ambivalent role in the "War on Terror."

It would be inconceivable for a denazified, post-1945 Germany to be a *bona fide* member of the family of nations, yet, at the same time, to tolerate the existence of a nationwide network of *Hitlerjugend* camps and schools preaching Aryan supremacy and the virtues of *die Volksgemeinschaft*. And yet, Musharraf's government has consistently backtracked on its promise to control the Islamic schools that are grooming new generations of terrorists. Pakistan remains the epicenter of global *jihad*, a breeding ground for the new echelons of "martyrs." She is an enormous Islamist campus in which thousands of *madrassas* prepare over one million students for the rigors of *jihad*. When pressed, Musharraf announces the closure of some of the schools where "the eggs of the snake of terrorism are incubated," only to let them reopen later.

After September 11, Musharraf allowed the U.S. Air Force to use Pakistani facilities, winning praise from Mr. Bush and obtaining an improvement in U.S.-Pakistani relations that had deteriorated since the end of the Cold War. On his own admission, however, he did so under duress. In a sensational *60 Minutes* interview last year, Musharraf said that the Bush administration threatened to bomb Pakistan "back to the stone age" after the September 11 attacks if the country did not cooperate with America's war in Afghanistan. He said the threat was delivered by the assistant secretary of state, Richard Armitage, in conversations with Pakistan's intelligence director. "One has to think and take actions in the interests of the nation, and that's what I did," he told CBS—hardly the grounds for a solid and enduring alliance.

While Musharraf's cooperation, such as it was, proved helpful in the initial military campaign in Afghanistan, the Pakistani army's subsequent deliberate failure to block Al Qaeda's escape routes ensured that most key suspects, probably including Osama bin Laden, safely slipped away.

Afghanistan's president, Hamid Karzai, blames Pakistan for the recent re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vival of the Taliban and points out that religious hardliners in Pakistan are sending their students over the border to fight a holy war in Afghanistan without hindrance. "We know very well that in Pakistani madrassas, boys are being told to go to Afghanistan for jihad. They're being told to go and burn schools and clinics." Snubbing Karzai, Musharraf responded by canceling at the last minute his participation in a meeting in Kabul last August that was aimed at trying to end the terrorism and insurgency threatening both countries. To this day, the Pakistani military are loath to risk alienating their erstwhile Taliban clients and allies, and the remote border areas remain a safe haven for the insurgents. Most of the militants arrested in late 2001 were released without charge only months later—among them, the heads of groups listed as terrorist organizations by Britain and the United States.

Not only the Taliban but most other Islamic extremist and terrorist movements all over the world were born out of ideas conceived in the battlefields of Afghanistan and subsequently matured and spread from Pakistan's political, military, and religious establishment. These movements enjoyed the support of the Pakistani military-intelligence structures—most notably, the powerful Inter-Service Intelligence Agency (ISI), a leading promoter of state-sponsored terrorism. It grew rich and mighty thanks to the U.S. role in helping Muslims fight the Soviets in the 1980's. It was hedging its bets during the 2001 Afghan war: U.S. intelligence admitted to having no idea "which side of the street they're playing on," an opinion unwittingly echoed by former ISI chief Hamid Gul—who later became a vociferous defender of the defeated Taliban. He freely admitted that "it is unnatural to expect the ISI to act against what it knows are Pakistan's best interests and be as motivated as it was before."

Iran may be dominating the headlines, but the future of Pakistan's nuclear program should be of even greater concern to the United States. The question vexing the U.S. intelligence community for the past decade is not so much whether there will be a nuclear exchange between Pakistan and India, but what will happen if some of Pakistan's assets fall into the wrong hands. Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, the architect of Pakistan's nuclear program, stunned the world in 2003 when he admitted to leaking nuclear-weapons secrets to—among others—North Korea, Libya, and Iran.

In a brief interlude in what is a grim continuum, Benazir Bhutto promised a new dawn for Pakistan in the 1980's but, in the end, had to make compromises with the religious groups. Her career has been anything but a demonstration that women may succeed in Islam. The civilian government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was overthrown on October 12, 1999, by General Musharraf—who is now a self-anointed president. That was the first military coup in a major country since the end of the Cold War, and the first ever in a country with nuclear weapons.

Eight years later, the Bush administration is still struggling to find a way to keep Musharraf in power. Washington is currently said to be prodding him quietly to share authority with his longtime rival, Benazir Bhutto, as a way of broadening his base. He appears to have lost so much domestic support in recent months that U.S. officials view a deal with Miss Bhutto that would result in her becoming prime minister once again as his best chance of remaining president.

If Musharraf fails in that endeavor, however, it will not be the end of the world. It has always been wrong to assume either that Musharraf was turning into a Pakistani Kemal Ataturk, or that Pakistan herself is a reliable American partner. If and when Musharraf goes, at least this country will be forced to consider the problem of Pakistan with a clarity and sobriety that have been lacking over the past 60 years. Such clarity may also prompt the development of a solid strategic partnership between the United States and India, the country that is America's natural partner *vis-à-vis* both China and the Islamic world.

China is fast becoming the world's second-largest economy and a first-rate military power. Her regional clout will be more easily counterbalanced by a prosperous and well-armed India that has heretofore been devoid of expansionist designs. If India's impressive economic growth is not disrupted by the lingering socialist nostalgia of an influential segment of her political class, the country will become a fully fledged great power within a decade.

India's role as America's strategic economic partner cannot be overestimated. China's commercial development has depended on commands from above and, on the American side, the desire of U.S. firms for a cheap manufacturing platform for exports back to the United States. India's growth, by contrast, is not confined to heavy industry geared for the export market. Because India's economic growth is being driven from the bottom up, satisfying the wants of a rising technical and professional class is an indication of a balanced commercial symbiosis with the United States. Indeed, there has even been a counterflow of Indians, who had come to live and work in the United States, returning to India, where their earnings go farther.

More significantly still, India has been a major victim of *jihad* over the centuries. This historical legacy, coupled with her stable democratic institutions inherited from the British Raj, make India a far more reliable and significant partner than Pakistan in the Global War on Terror. By contrast, Pakistan is only the most prominent of several supposed "allies" against *jihad* terrorism that are inherently unreliable because of an endemic Islamist sentiment in their society and officialdom. Their reliability is only as good as the supply of American largesse and the longevity of individual strongmen. India's position on this geopolitical issue of prime importance, by contrast, is neither opportunistic nor subject to change.

It is foolish to pretend that America can be equally close to both India and Pakistan. The two countries are natural zero-sum rivals ideologically and territorially, and their ruling elites and populations differ widely in their attitudes toward the United States. (In Pakistan, it is 23-percent favorable; in India, over 50 percent.) The choice that needs to be made is clear. It is dictated by culture, economics, geopolitics, and the American interest.

c

News & Vie
by Srdja Trifkovic
www.ChroniclesMagazine.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHRISTIANITY

Some Thoughts on *Motu Proprio* Mania

by Mark Shea

I am gratified that the long-awaited *motu proprio* from Pope Benedict, urging a wider celebration of the Tridentine Rite, is out. I'm happy for those, including my son, who love to worship in that way. More power to 'em. Some of the loveliest Catholics I know are devotees of the Tridentine Rite.

That said, I was not personally excited when news of the *motu proprio* broke, since it doesn't especially affect me. I attend a Paul VI Mass that is reverently celebrated by the Dominicans of Blessed Sacrament parish in Seattle. My attitude toward liturgy is "Just give me my lines and my blocking." I then endeavor to learn and forget about them in precisely the same way I endeavor to break in my shoes. The point of shoes is not to notice them, but to walk in them. Shoes you constantly notice are Bad Shoes. Liturgy you focus on is liturgy that's not doing its job, which is to refer us to God, not to itself.

Now there are two basic reasons people focus on liturgy instead of God, just as there are two reasons a person will focus on his shoes.

The first reason is that the shoes hurt. Lord knows that, in a time of widespread liturgical abuse, people have been hurt by badly celebrated liturgy, and I empathize with those who have. Many have suffered from self-styled "progressives" who regard the Paul VI Rite as their personal playground and laboratory. Worse, they have treated the Tridentine Rite and those who attend it as throwbacks to some imagined Dark Ages. In place of the authentic Paul VI Mass, many Catholics have had to endure a perpetual Feast of St. Narcissus celebrated by Fr. Heylookatme at what Amy Welborn has aptly called the "Church of Aren't We Fabulous." Instead of the worship of God, we get perpetual hymns such as the execrable "Anthem" celebrating our Usness, affirming us in our okayness, and glorifying our wonderfulness for being kind enough to admit God into those parts of our lives where we feel comfortable with Him. The notion among such "progressives" often seems to be that the Mass isn't enough. They appear to think that people who come for the Christ Who is present in Word and Sacrament have to be bludgeoned into a sort of plastic bonhomie with glad-handing and yuk-it-up homilies about sports and TV shows. The phoniness of such "community-building" experiments on the lab rats in the pews can be awfully wearying for those who have lives and who do not require that the Mass be transformed into a Kiwanis Club meeting in order for them to be socially fulfilled. We like our commandments in the proper order: Love God, then neighbor.

That's one of the reasons for the *motu proprio*, to try to give succor to those injured by dreadful abuses of the Paul VI Rite. I wish fans of the Tridentine Rite well in finding a Mass that is reverently celebrated and in receiving redress for legitimate grievances about real abuses, just as I hope the man with painful shoes will soon get new and comfortable shoes—so that both can get on with the business of walking with God.

But I also note that there is another reason some people become focused on their shoes, or the liturgy: oversensitivity. Some people are hypochondriacs who imagine injury where there is none or who grossly exaggerate small irritations into great big ones. Did the priest hold the Host high enough during the Consecration? Is that person dressed in a way I think fitting for Mass? I can't bear altar girls! Those people held hands during the Our Father! There's a parish "renewal" program in the bulletin—I wonder what that's supposed to mean? I see they've added that 15th Station of the Cross. That tells me all I need to know about *this* place.

Some people become so inflamed over such matters that they sacrifice the love of neighbor on the altar of liturgical correctness. Some can even reach the point where they regard those who attend the Paul VI Mass—even a reverently celebrated one—as second-class Catholics. I know this, because I've been on the receiving end of such judgments repeatedly. When I've stated that I believe the Mass is the Mass is the Mass and so I'm content with either the Tridentine or Paul VI liturgies, I've been asked by Tridentine enthusiasts, "Is a Black Mass a Mass also?" (Talk about telegraphing contempt!) I've been told repeatedly and in no uncertain terms that the only reason I like the Paul VI Rite is that I don't know any better, am still a Protestant at heart, or need to have exposure to the true Mass, which is vastly more nourishing to the soul than the pathetic desiccated "Novus Ordo."

When I reply that I have been exposed to the Tridentine Rite and offer my chief impression from the experience ("Ah! Now I see why they wanted to reform the liturgy!"), there are frowns of disdain. Now, I don't mean that I think the Tridentine Rite "inferior" any more than I think the Paul VI Rite inferior. I think my proper response to the Mass is gratitude, not a critical spirit. But, speaking only for me, I find the Paul VI Mass more spiritually nourishing (though any liturgy promulgated by the Church is good enough for me).

For this sin of believing and professing that any approved liturgy of the Church is good enough for me and that it's not my job to find fault but to receive gratefully, I'm told that what I'm really saying is "it is all about me and what the liturgy does or doesn't do for me." In that marvelous "heads we win, tails you lose" arrangement, I am supposed to feel the superiority of the Tridentine Rite, and if I don't feel it, it's because I'm selfishly putting my feelings ahead of the TRUTH, which is fully expressed by the feelings of Tridentine Rite fans.

I don't think those who prefer the Tridentine Rite are, for that reason, either better or worse Catholics than those who are at home in the Paul VI Rite. Nor do I regard the Mass as something we are commissioned by Christ to weigh in the balance and find wanting. To be sure, I dislike liturgical abuses, whether they be the apocryphal clown Mass or the five-minute Tridentine Hunting Masses of European nobility (in which the Mass was sped along at light speed so m'lord could get on with his fox-hunting expedition). But I don't throw the babe out with the bath and say that, because the Paul VI liturgy is often abused, it is therefore an abuse itself.

Consequently, I lack a lot of interest in the *motu proprio*. I'm glad Benedict

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is interested in it. That's his job. I simply don't see why it's my job. My parish is reverently celebrating the Paul VI Rite. My job is to receive that gift, not to look it in the mouth. Nor is my job to suggest that, if you like the Tridentine Rite instead, you are a second-class Catholic and a narcissist. It would be nice if many enthusiasts for the Tridentine liturgy could return the favor.

Mark Shea blogs at Catholic and Enjoying It!

TRADE

Free Trade and the Sacrificialists

by Larry Eubank

Mainstream economics "experts" constantly attempt to lull the fears of anybody worried at seeing our manufacturing sector relocated abroad and our factories turned into ghost towns. They invoke Adam Smith's arguments against mercantilism, arguing that it is a matter of free trade, that free trade always is the best policy, and insist that "protectionism" is a reversion to the policies Smith discredited so long ago.

P.J. O'Rourke once gave a good description of the principles of free trade:

> Economic progress requires division of labor, freedom of trade, and pursuit of self-interest. One person produces one sort of thing—a sack of rice, perhaps. Another person produces another sort of thing . . . Being self-interested, both people want both things, so they trade.

That's the situation Adam Smith defended in *Wealth of Nations*, arguing against the mercantile theory, which called for maximizing exports and minimizing imports in order to maintain a positive balance of trade and a maximum amount of gold circulating in the country. But note carefully the picture O'Rourke presents: One party produces goods on his own initiative, and the other party does similarly, and then they trade. The arguments for free trade apply to such situations.

The situation we're faced with today is not one in which this definition applies. Instead of each side producing goods on its own hook, then trading with the other, we have one party (ourselves) setting up the other party in business, building them manufacturing facilities, and investing capital in order to enable them to produce goods; then, we trade with them.

Thus, what we are really talking about is not free trade but capital flight—the investment of our productive capital in foreign countries. And the question is, Does this situation lead to increasing wealth for our nation?

We might seek an answer by examining an illustration Smith gave about the benefits of trade:

> It is the maxim of every prudent master of a family, never to attempt to make at home what it will cost him more to make than to buy. The taylor does not attempt to make his own shoes, but buys them of the shoemaker. The shoemaker does not attempt to make his own clothes, but employs a taylor . . .
>
> What is prudence in the conduct of every private family, can scarce be folly in that of a great kingdom. If a foreign country can supply us with a commodity cheaper than we ourselves can make it, better buy it of them with some part of the produce of our own industry, employed in a way in which we have some advantage.

In other words, it is more economically efficient to concentrate on the things we are best at and can produce most efficiently, and to trade those goods for items other people or countries can produce better.

Note that Smith's example shows the benefits of trade, not of the alienation of capital. Smith says, "if a foreign country can supply us," not, "if we can invest our capital in a foreign country in order to supply ourselves." Smith says, "The taylor does not attempt to make his own shoes, but buys them of the shoemaker"; he doesn't say, "The taylor buys his neighbor a cobbler's bench, tools, and materials to start a shoemaking business, in order to provide himself with shoes." Smith's conclusions cannot be stretched to include the latter situation.

This truly is the most elementary of economic principles—first-semester stuff. Smith argued for free trade and against the mercantile objective of maximizing the amount of gold and silver in a country by maintaining a favorable—*i.e.*, positive—balance of trade. The mercantilist objectives weren't the path to increased wealth, he maintained; rather—and this is the whole point of his book, the ultimate wealth-producing principle which he identifies—the aim should be to increase production by increasing capital investment. That is the path to the increased wealth of a nation.

Smith sets forth this essential conclusion, his identification of the central wealth-producing principle, plainly. After arguing that the balance of trade doesn't matter, he says,

> There is another balance, indeed . . . very different from the balance of trade, and which, according as it happens to be either favourable or unfavourable, necessarily occasions the prosperity or decay of every nation. This is the balance of the annual produce and consumption. If the exchangeable value of the annual produce . . . exceeds that of the annual consumption, the capital of the society must annually increase in proportion to this excess. The society in this case lives within its revenue, and what is annually saved out of its revenue, is naturally added to its capital, and employed so as to increase still further the annual produce. If the exchangeable value of the annual produce, on the contrary, fall short of the annual consumption, the capital of the society must annually decay in proportion to this deficiency. The expence of the society in this case exceeds its revenue, and necessarily encroaches upon its capital. Its capital, therefore, must necessarily decay, and together with it, the exchangeable value of the annual produce of its industry.

For Smith, then, the goal is an increase of productive capital ("the wealth of nations") and, thus, production. When production takes place in a foreign country, and consumption takes place here, however, the result is a deficit, not a surplus, in the balance of production and consumption. We are no longer "living within our revenue" but going into debt. When capital investment is made abroad, it is an increase in the other country's productive capacity, not our own. The mes-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sage of *Wealth of Nations* is that this is the path to poverty.

If we spend all that we earn, or if we spend more than we earn, there is nothing left over to invest as production capital. That situation causes a decline in wealth. We might call this the Micawber Principle, after the *David Copperfield* character; in one film version of Dickens' classic, Micawber says:

> Young friend, I counsel you: Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen pounds–result, happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty-one pounds—result, misery!

And the result is the same with the "balance of the annual produce and consumption" of a country, because, as Smith writes,

> The capital of all the individuals of a nation is increased in the same manner as that of a single individual, by their continually accumulating and adding to it whatever they save out of their income.

The "excess of production over consumption"—that is, savings—is available for capital investment:

> The annual produce of the land and labour of any nation can be increased in its value by no other means but by increasing either the number of its productive labourers, or the productive powers of those labourers who had before been employed. The number of its productive labourers, it is evident, can never be much increased, but in consequence of an increase of capital, or of the funds destined for maintaining them. The productive powers of the same number of labourers cannot be increased, but in consequence either of some addition and improvement to those machines and instruments which facilitate and abridge labour; or of a more proper division and distribution of employment. In either case an additional capital is almost always required.

Offshoring means alienating capital: that is, it means a decrease in capital investment (and, thus, production) here, and an increase in it elsewhere. As such, it is a detriment: Our consumption remains the same (or goes up), while our production decreases.

This elementary concept is being confounded and confuted with the simple-minded formulation *free trade*. The term *comparative advantage* is also thrown in, with no reference to the actual meaning of the term, as a sort of all-explanatory magical incantation. Most of the ongoing debate about offshoring has taken place on a CliffsNotes level of economic understanding.

The two opposing sides in the controversy are thus arguing at cross purposes, holding different definitions of the central term. And a lot of *ad hominem* arguments are being directed at "protectionists." The latter want to stop capital flight; they do indeed want to protect our economy; but they are accused of being against "free trade." Actually, nobody has attacked free trade or suggested it should be abandoned; that's a straw man used by supporters of offshoring—those we might call "sacrificialists," as a counterpart to their derogatory term "protectionists." And so the argument continues in this atmosphere of rancor, ill will, and economic illiteracy.

Among the pundits are a great host of people who can see with their own eyes disastrous events and situations, and yet proclaim those disasters to be a tremendous blessing. We may call these "true believers," able to convince themselves of anything once they have their theoretical notions fixed. Because they are bolstered by abstract theories explaining what must happen (increasing wealth), they're able to ignore the clear evidence in front of them about what is actually happening.

The ordinary citizen, uncontaminated by theory, takes alarm as factory after factory pulls out of this country and moves to foreign lands. Intellectuals, however, can explain such things away, minimize events, and ridicule and patronize their opponents. Their theory must be right, they believe, and so they are able to discount all evidence to the contrary.

When a theory is outmoded or no longer fits the existing situation, or when the pundits' grasp of the theory was incorrect and misapplied to begin with, however, that theory should be abandoned. Instead, the pundits continue to try to fit the square peg of reality into the round hole of their misperceptions and half-grasped theory. It's the Emperor's New Clothes all over again, but with more

tragic results.

Economists maintain that, while offshoring or globalization has cost many American workers their jobs, that's progress: New inventions always cost workers in old industries their jobs.

Sending the selfsame machines that American workers were using to China, so that Chinese citizens can produce the same goods, is not progress. It is a decrease in production by us, with no decrease in consumption, and that puts the "proportion between capital and revenue" further into the red—further along the path to the "poverty of nations."

Any third-rate, C+ student should be able to see through this argument about "inventions." What is the new invention or discovery? Is it a method of producing First World goods with laborers who have a Third World standard of living? Is it a method whereby factory owners can enrich themselves while impoverishing the country as a whole? That's not how capitalism is supposed to work; the Invisible Hand is supposed to function such that, when a person produces goods or otherwise contributes to the economy, it benefits not only him but society as a whole. Manufacturers who offshore production and alienate productive capital have discovered a way to make the Invisible Hand give us all a very visible finger. That may be new, but it's not progress.

Users of the "new inventions" argument don't want to see through it. Political correctness—the liberals' cult of political virtue—has reached the field of economics, and it is now personal virtue and self-esteem that are at stake, not sound economics. It's considered immoral for this country to pursue her own interests, to seek what's good for herself.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A distorted political morality requires us to be "sacrificial"—that is, to sacrifice our country's interests to other countries, in order to boost the pundits' presumed moral virtue.

The pundits build their moral stature by being vicariously self-sacrificing. That is, their sacrificialist policy doesn't require them to sacrifice themselves; it requires sacrificing the country as a whole to their policies. In the economic realm, this is known as an "externality": The benefits (moral kudos) accrue to the sacrificialists, while the economic burden is borne by everyone, especially everyone with a job in manufacturing.

China now holds an enormous amount of U.S. currency. This doesn't worry the pundits, any more than deserted factories worry them. But the enormous amount of U.S. currency China and other countries hold is a sign that the "balance of the annual produce and consumption" of this country is so heavily weighted to the consumption side that

> The expence of the society in this case exceeds its revenue, and necessarily encroaches upon its capital. Its capital, therefore, must necessarily decay, and together with it, the exchangeable value of the annual produce of its industry.

And, as a result,

> The same quantity of money . . . cannot long remain in any country in which the value of the annual produce diminishes. The sole use of money is to circulate consumable goods . . . The quantity of money, therefore, which can be annually employed in any country must be determined by the value of the consumable goods annually circulated within it.

That explains, if any explanation were needed, why the money ends up abroad, and it is a good indication of what our actual economic situation is. Economists should stop writing Pollyannaish articles explaining why alienation of capital, economic decay, and the loss of our whole manufacturing sector will be good for us.

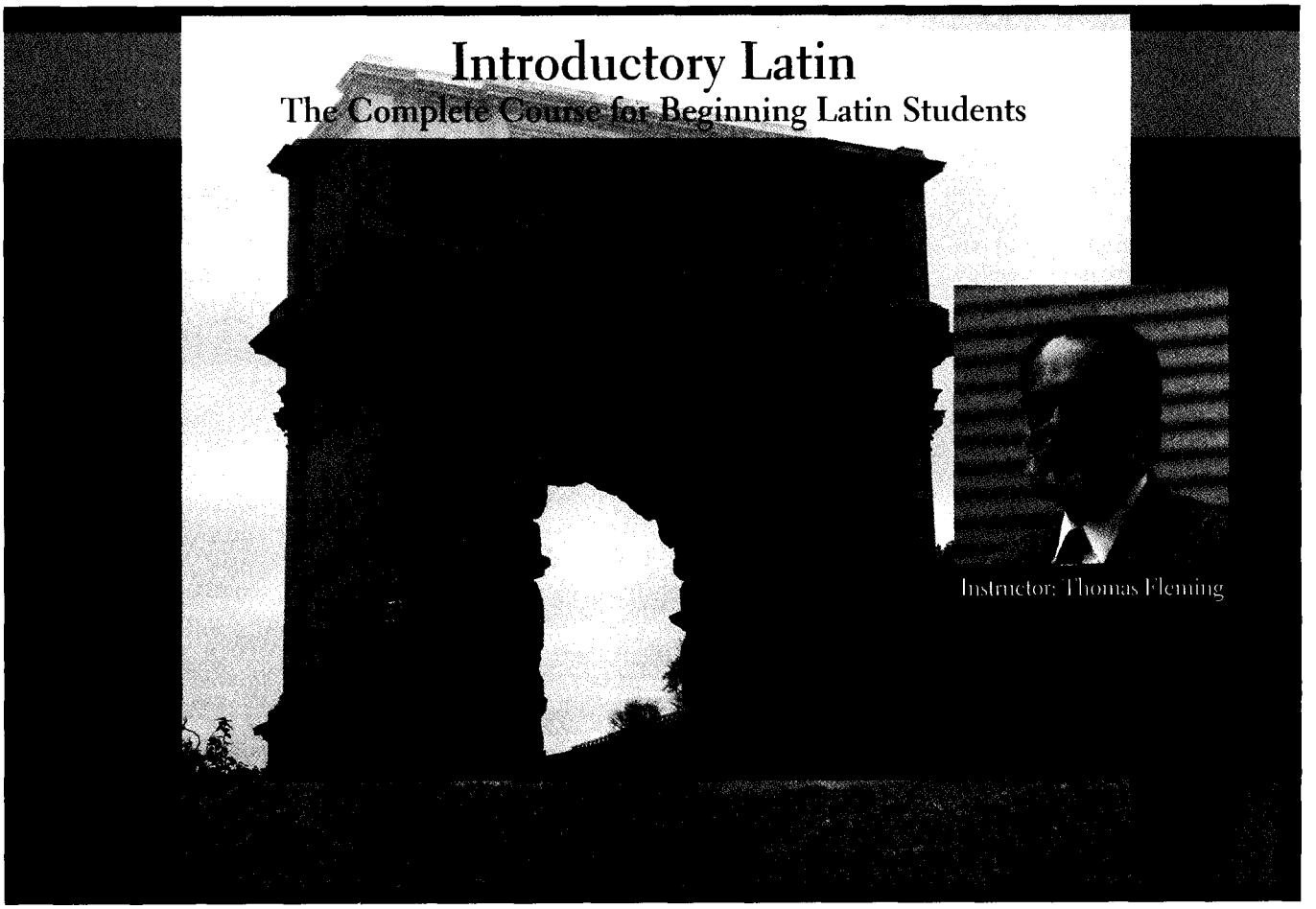
If all this is true, how have we maintained our prosperity as we have? Where's the poverty?

There are several possible answers. For one thing, as Joe Scarborough says, "Rome wasn't burnt in a day." The recent depreciation of the dollar may be one sign of an impending reckoning.

Then, too, to use another common phrase, "We're in debt up to our eyeballs." Our economy may function fairly well, as long as we continue to borrow huge, staggering sums of money. And the biblical Proverb reminds us that "The borrower is servant to the lender." We're living on borrowed time, as well as money. This can't go on forever.

One reason offshoring, with a corresponding loss of capital, is a problem now, and not before, is that, in the past, countries with a Third World standard of living also had Third World production technology. Countries where wages were a small fraction of those in First World countries weren't competitors in production, because, although their production costs were minuscule, they weren't capable of producing goods for sale in the developed world. They didn't have First World machinery and factories.

Nowadays, the skills required for production with such machines are easily acquired; the goods can be shipped rapidly and with no tariffs to speak of; and communications and inventory-management



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

methods are fast and efficient. So Third World countries can be given First World means of production.

And since it is profitable to do this, the situation operates under a version of Murphy's Law: If anyone can produce at lower prices, someone will. And if someone does, everyone must—that's competition. People won't buy more expensive goods when the same thing is available cheaper. And, since businesses have to compete, they simply have no choice but to offshore—not from malice or because they hate their workers, but to be competitive. Unions demonize the capitalist bosses for the practice, but that's just normal union bias and demagogy; economic forces are at work, not capitalist exploitation.

The net result is an imbalance: Manufacturers want to produce solely in the Third World, to sell in the First. The producers profit, and we all get cheaper goods, but at a cost of the loss of capital investment and jobs. That kind of "free trade" does not promote the wealth of this nation.

We've also heard enough chortling about how "They're selling us stuff dirt cheap, cheaper than we can produce it, haw, haw, haw." This amounts to a prescription for a new form of mercantilism; it concentrates on one factor of the economy to the exclusion of all others. "Minimize the price of consumer goods" is as mistaken a policy as the mercantilist theory of "maximize gold reserves." An economy is an organic whole, composed of many elements, and all of them must be healthy in order for the economy to be whole. We have to have jobs; we have to make things as well as consume them.

Moreover, a country is more than just an economy. National security must also be taken into consideration. Consider China, for example. We're building China's economy at the expense of our own—shipping our manufacturing infrastructure to the Chinese as fast as we reasonably can. (And they already have virtually unlimited manpower.) This means we are effectively grooming them to take over the role of economic powerhouse of the world.

We're also giving them all of our advanced technology and educating their college students in our universities—so much so that an American student in an upper-level computer-science or nuclear-physics course nowadays feels like a stranger in a strange land. (And it's a hostile one: Chinese students in American universities are openly disdainful and hostile to white Americans.)

The United States won World War II because of her incredible manufacturing capacity—the capacity we're now so eager to give to China (and to other cheap-wage countries). In any major future war, we'll have to go to the Chinese and ask them to make us some airplane wings, because Boeing is now giving them all the means to design and produce wings. As the *Seattle Times* opines,

> The steady transfer of airplane manufacturing from Seattle to countries like China shows little sign of slowing. Lower labor costs are only part of the reason. In China, the heated competition between Boeing and Airbus for nearly $200 billion in sales over the next two decades hinges not just on prices and politics. The more willing Boeing and Airbus are to share technology and provide local jobs, the more likely they are to win Chinese orders.

That is, Boeing and Airbus must bribe China with technological information in order to get her to accept our economy. As Boeing itself proudly attests,

> Boeing supports Chinese efforts to ensure a safe, efficient, and profitable Chinese aviation system to keep pace with the country's rapid economic growth. Commercial aviation is crucial to China's economic growth, and Boeing provides the world's best airplanes to China.
>
> Boeing helps Chinese companies develop skills, achieve certification, and join the world aviation and supplier networks. China has an increasingly sophisticated and expanding role in the commercial aviation industry. China has a role on all of Boeing [*sic*] airplanes—the 737, 747, 767, 777, and 787. China has an important, highly visible role on the 737—building horizontal stabilizers, vertical fins, portions of the aft tail section, doors, wing-panels, and other parts. China builds all the trailing-edge wing ribs for every 747. China has an important role on the new 787 Dreamliner airplane, building the rudder, wing-to-body fairing panels, and leading edge of the vertical fin. China is the first location for conversions for the new 747-400 Boeing Converted Freighter—with many parts and assemblies built in China and conversion, test, certification in China and delivery from China.

Boeing's fatuously proud statement, praising itself for selling out our national security and economy, raises a question: Do we want to resist the Chinese, or would we rather build their economy by sacrificing our own? In light of that question, "protectionism" sounds better than "sacrificialism."

Larry Eubank is the author of The Case Against Capital.

THE SERVILE STATE

On the Lam From the Census Bureau

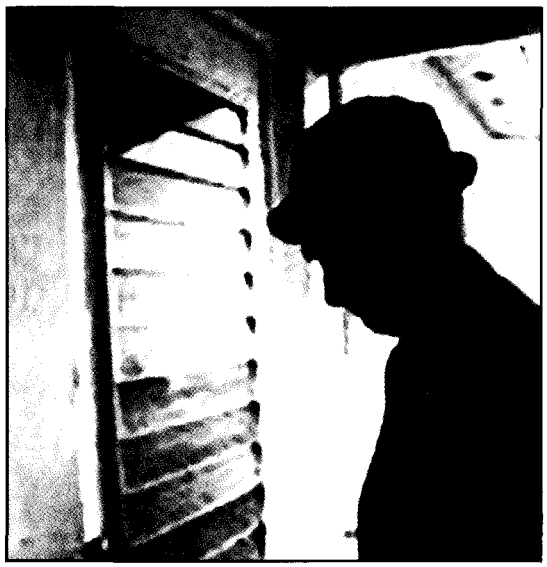
by Doug Bandow

I'm hiding out—from the Census Bureau. True, they usually don't send out U.S. marshals with guns and handcuffs. But I'm playing it safe anyway, because the Bureau has been after me since I failed to fill out its treasured questionnaire, "The American Community Survey."

I've been through this before. I don't mind if the government learns how many people live here. That's necessary for drawing electoral districts, which is a legitimate government function. So, on the traditional census form, I routinely fill in the number of people living in my house and leave the rest of the questions blank. That has led the Bureau to call and even send busybodies to my door to pry into my affairs. They are as determined as those kids recruited to sell magazine subscriptions at inflated prices, only much worse. A few years ago, I received a special small-business survey. It was even longer than the decennial long form, so I tossed it in the trash. The Census Bureau thoughtfully sent a second one, followed by a threatening letter. The government eventually gave up on me; maybe they found a substitute victim.

More recently, I received a new, equally obnoxious demand for information. And it *was* a demand. Although Bureau Director Charles Louis Kincannon's cov-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



er letter requested me "to help us with this very important survey by completing it and mailing it back," it also observed that I "am required by U.S. law to respond to this survey." Indeed, the little pamphlet of "Frequently Asked Questions" was tougher: "Title 13, as changed by Title 18, imposes a penalty for not responding."

When I didn't respond, the Bureau sent its telemarketers after me, repeatedly attempting to reach me by phone. Then, a field representative dropped by my house when I wasn't home; she left her business card along with Form 11-38A, entitled REQUEST FOR APPOINTMENT. The flyer urged me to call: "I am required to make contact with an adult member of this household and I am obligated to return until contact has been made."

Then came a letter from the program supervisor, sadly noting that the field representative "has been unable to reach you." Imagine that. I was a little offended, though, that the letter was simply addressed to Current Resident. Obviously, they're more interested in my house than they are in me. Interestingly, the Bureau dropped its confrontational tone: "We hope we can count on your cooperation in this important survey and are enclosing some information about the survey." Then came a couple more visits from the field representative, highlighted by her waiting business card when I returned from a trip.

It's typical of government today. Government cares not one whit about the value of my time or my preference for privacy. "The Census Bureau is required by U.S. law to keep your answer confidential," Mr. Kincannon assured me. (The program supervisor also tried to reassure me about this point: "Names and addresses are never reported in our findings.") Even if I believe that such a provision offers any real guarantee of confidentiality, however, why should I want to let the Feds ransack my personal life?

Alas, the last census is out of date, the Bureau informs me: "the characteristics of your household may have changed since Census 2000." Well, no, actually. In any case, Director Kincannon contended that the information is important, since it will "help decide where new schools, hospitals, and fire stations are needed."

Aren't those local functions? In my case, isn't the Fairfax County school board likely to track enrollment numbers in planning classroom construction? Isn't the county board of supervisors likely to look at the construction of new neighborhoods in deciding on the number and location of firefighters? Why not leave the questioning up to Fairfax County? (In fact, they recently sent me a school survey. Apparently, they don't trust, or need, the Census Bureau.)

As for hospitals, that's largely a private function. Kaiser Permanente doesn't need to know my income, education level, or ancestry to decide if it wants to add to its facilities nearby. Bed occupancy rates will tell potential investors more than my answer on whether I have trouble bathing.

Moreover, explained the Bureau, the data is used "to show a large corporation that a town has the workforce the company needs." But shouldn't gaining such information be the firm's problem? Big business wants subsidies. Big business wants information. Big business wants aid, assistance, and help at every turn. So what else is new? That's no reason to give big business what it wants.

Director Kincannon won't give up. He claims that "the information also is used to develop programs to reduce traffic congestion, provide job training, and plan for the healthcare needs of the elderly." The program supervisor went further, contending that the data would help "evaluate programs such as welfare and workforce diversification."

What, pray tell, does Washington have to do with solving traffic congestion? The most basic traffic issue in Northern Virginia has to do with cooperation between the state government in Richmond and the local authorities, not with the time I leave for work. It doesn't take a genius to observe more traffic on the road ever earlier.

Job training should be a private function and shouldn't be affected whether or not I have a second mortgage. As for the elderly, has anyone missed where older Americans tend to retire and when assisted-living facilities tend to fill? Anyway, my answer to "What languages do you speak at home?" doesn't seem likely to improve planning for America's aging population.

We'd all like more accountability for government initiatives, but, over the years, little good has come from scores of welfare programs. We didn't need the American Community Survey to recognize that the entire welfare system had indeed failed when Congress reformed it in 1996. And, in the future, we should be able to figure out whether the programs are working without the survey.

Most of the questions seek to elicit information that appears interesting rather than useful. In some cases, the answers will be put to ill effect—supporting America's race-based spoils system, for instance.

The survey begins by asking the name, age, and relationship of anyone living in my house. Then it gets into the important stuff. Is anyone Hispanic, and, if so, what kind of Hispanic? There's room to list about five people. If you have more folks at home, then go ahead and put down their names: "We may call you for more information about them," explains the Census Bureau. Apparently, the agency's curiosity is insatiable.

The next section is on housing. What kind of a building do I live in? What were my agricultural sales? (I wonder, does that include marijuana and coca?) How many vehicles do I own? How much do I spend on utilities? How much is my mortgage? Why do people live here? (If I sent the form in, I'd probably fill in "Hell if I know" as an "other reason" in answering this one.) At least the Bureau doesn't ask—this time!—how many bathrooms I have.

After they're finished with my house, the Bureau has 42 questions for me—and for every other person who lives in my house. Where was I born? What level of school have I completed? (I thought they said they wanted the answers to plan new school construction, not figure out where facilities should have been built decades ago.) What's my ancestry, and do I speak another language?

There are several questions on my mental and physical health. My favor-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ite: Do I have a long-term "physical, mental, or emotional condition" that makes it hard for me to shop? (Does inadequate income count, I wonder?)

The census busybodies certainly are eclectic. Do I care for any grandkids? Did I serve in the military? (If so, when and for how long?) Do I work? What time do I leave? You've just got to wonder what they do with this information. Does, say, the Census Bureau tally up departure times and send an e-mail to Virginia warning that the Washington suburbs face an increased risk of highway congestion at, say, 7:45 AM, because that's when I head out? (I'd recommend that the state government instead send someone out to assess road-construction needs.)

Finally, the Census Bureau asks all sorts of questions about my work and how much I earn. Isn't complying with the IRS enough? I pay my taxes. Shouldn't that satisfy Uncle Sam?

In case I don't find the questionnaire self-explanatory, the Bureau has included a 14-page guide. I should list bills even if I don't pay them. I should do the same for taxes, but not if they are due for a previous year. Cell phones get counted only if I do pay my bills, however, since, if I don't, service is discontinued. "Cars or trucks permanently out of working order" shouldn't be counted. If I don't know the fuel used by my apartment, I can "obtain this information from the owner, manager, or janitor." I shouldn't report my religion as my ancestry.

Still, you just have to love the Feds. They ask the same 42 questions for persons two through five, assuming persons two through five reside with me. Pages 22 and 23 "are intentionally left blank." (Trust me, I never complain when I find a blank page on a government form.) The Bureau estimates that, "for the average household, this form will take 38 minutes to complete." But how many people live in the average household?

Finally—and very reassuringly—the Bureau concludes:

> Respondents are not required to respond to any information collection unless it displays a valid approval number from the Office of Management and budget. This 8-digit number appears in the bottom right on the front cover of this form.

Yes, indeed, the number appears. OMB No. 0607-0810. Very reassuring.

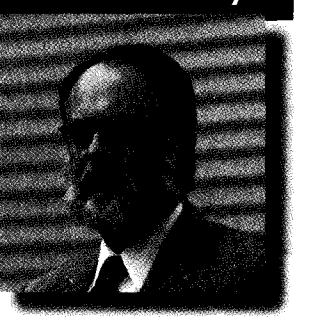
Undoubtedly, some governments somewhere would find some of this information useful. Let's be frank, however: Anyone who has watched local politics knows that officials rarely make objective decisions after sitting in ivory towers, sifting through abstract Census Bureau data. The advantage of local government is that lawmakers can drive around and talk to people. They don't need federally collected data to decide on school placement or road construction.

Uncle Sam already does far too much and threatens far too many people. Once every ten years, let the Feds ask how many people live where. Beyond that, Washington and, most importantly, states and localities should contract out surveys to private firms, which effectively—and voluntarily—collect information upon which companies base billions in investment decisions. We don't need a big Census Bureau—especially one that is so eager and determined to force its way into my living room.

Doug Bandow is vice president for policy for Citizen Outreach and the author of Leviathan Unchained: Washington's Bipartisan Big Government Consensus *(forthcoming from Xulon Press).*

THE CHRISTIAN AGE: Themes in Medieval History

Presented by
The Rockford Institute Academy
Four semesters taught by
Dr. Thomas Fleming



Church and Empire
From Constantine though the papacy's return from Avignon

Feudalism and Chivalry
France and England from 1066 through the Wars of the Roses

The Clash With Islam
From the First Crusade to the Fall of Constantinople

A Christian Civilization
Poetry, theology, art, and architecture

Semester I: Church and Empire
Tuesdays at 5:30 P.M., September 4, 2007, through December 17, 2007

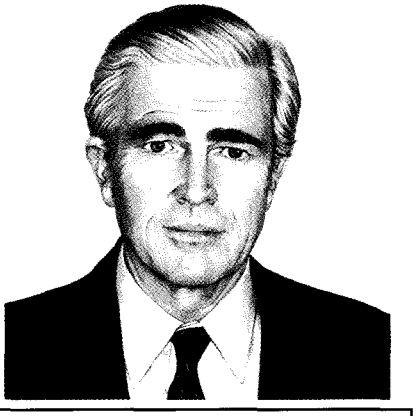
at The Rockford Institute, 928 North Main Street, Rockford, Illinois
$100.00 for the first student / $75.00 for each additional family member

For more information, call Christopher Check, executive vice president, at (815) 964-5811.
Scholarships available for full-time students and teachers, including homeschoolers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by George McCartney

Henny Penny



No End in Sight
Produced by Representational Pictures
Directed and written
by Charles Ferguson
Distributed by Magnolia Pictures

The Bourne Ultimatum
Produced and distributed
by Universal Pictures
Directed by Paul Greengrass
Screenplay by Tony Gilroy
and Scott Z. Burns

The Simpsons Movie
Produced and distributed by Twentieth
Century Fox Film Corporation
Directed by David Silverman
Screenplay by James L. Brooks
and Matt Groening

Charles Ferguson is a man of parts. A former intelligence analyst, a highly successful internet entrepreneur, and a journalism professor, he decided last year to add another credit to his résumé and make a documentary on the Iraq war. The result is a film that pillories George W. Bush and his administration for impeachable malfeasance.

Since *No End in Sight* is Ferguson's first film, and since he made it largely with his own money, you would expect a certain extravagance in tone, a crowing over his subjects' demonstrable culpability, but there is nothing of the kind. Unlike Michael Moore, Ferguson is not one for pranks or sneering. His approach is measured, dispassionate, and thorough. He is content to let facts speak for themselves without resorting to mockery or invective. His film is all the more devastating for his restraint. Not that he's saying anything new. Those who have followed current events will be familiar with most of what he discloses. The power of his film resides in its gathering of the damning evidence onto 102 minutes' worth of celluloid. Ferguson has done his fellow citizens an invaluable service. If only they will watch his documentary, they will be disabused of the propaganda-induced notion embraced by more than half of America's people that Saddam Hussein was allied with Osama bin Laden and that Saddam bore personal responsibility for the attacks of September 11.

Using file footage interspersed with interviews with key figures involved in the invasion and subsequent occupation, Ferguson patiently reveals how a group of arrogant, ideological bullies led by Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Douglas Feith, and Richard Perle, among others, hijacked our Department of Defense to wage a preemptive and wholly unnecessary war. This bellicose cadre, only one of whom has military service, were beating the war drums since 1997, when the Project for a New American Century was created by reigning neoconservatives, including themselves, and began preaching the wisdom of establishing a "benevolent global hegemony" under American auspices. When the September 11 attacks shook America, the first thing on these men's minds was not the loss and suffering of our citizens but the opportunity to wage the war they had long desired. Ferguson interviews National Intelligence Council Chairman Robert Hutchings, who tells him that, within hours of the disaster, the word went out from Rumsfeld's office: Find a connection to Iraq.

The film revisits key moments following our invasion of Iraq. As we watch Baghdad fall, the camera cuts to Rumsfeld giving his "henny-penny" press briefing. "I picked up a newspaper today and I couldn't believe it," he says archly with one of those knowing executive smiles. "I read eight headlines that talked about chaos, violence, unrest. And it just was Henny Penny—'The sky is falling.' I've never seen anything like it! And here is a country that's being liberated." Sickening, isn't it?

The camera follows Iraqi looters in March 2003 carrying off whatever wasn't nailed down. Rumsfeld appears again, commenting blithely on the rampage: "Stuff happens." Then, Ferguson cuts to his interview with Col. Paul Hughes, director of the Strategic Policy Office in the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance. Hughes comments dryly on the stuff that happened. At one point, he witnessed men pull up with a crane and carry off the dismantled parts of a power plant. So it's not surprising that, to this day, electric power is critically scarce.

Hughes goes on to comment on the inexperience of the men running things from Washington, D.C. Few had military experience; none spoke Arabic. Yet they insisted they knew better than the generals and Arabists. When Paul Bremer was sent to Iraq to replace Gen. Jay Garner as head of the reconstruction effort, Hughes was appalled by his deBa'athification policy. Bremer dismissed Hussein's entire bureaucracy overnight. Hughes points out that most of these people didn't pose a threat; they only supported Hussein to hold their jobs. Throwing them out contributed to the chaos that has since engulfed the country. Bremer's decision to disband the army was even worse. Instantly, more than a half-million men were unemployed, most of them armed, all of them trained in the use of lethal force. Hughes tells of several Iraqi generals offering their troops to help American forces quell the insurgency. Bremer rejected these offers. Where do you think these Iraqis went? Hughes asks rhetorically. Some of them undoubtedly visited the unguarded ammunition dumps and helped themselves. This is why the insurgency has been able to escalate so rapidly and murderously. Only a man blinded by his own arrogance could have acted as stupidly as Bremer.

Almost as an afterthought, Ferguson's narrator, Campbell Scott, mentions that, at the time of the filming, there had been over 3,000 American soldiers killed, 20,000 more maimed, and perhaps as many as 600,000 Iraqis slain. Then the film's last words are left to Seth Moulton, leader of the Second Platoon of Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, Fourth Marines. Looking at Ferguson's camera, he asks, "Is this the best America can do?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We are left to infer the answer. Yes, this is the best we can do if we accept as our president a know-nothing rich kid controlled by oil-mad Machiavellians and neoconservative ideologues.

As everyone knows or should know, the Bush administration is bent on spreading war throughout the Middle East. If they have their way, Iran will be next, then Syria. These gentlemen think force will convert Islamic societies into modern secular states amenable to Western ways, especially in the commercial sphere. Once those retrograde sheiks wise up to the opportunities offered them through the auspices of Coca-Cola, high-definition TV, and The Gap, they will be eager to drop their silly Islamic faith and play ball with Israel and the United States. They'll clamor for democracy and consumer goods, and everyone will live happily ever after under the joint reign of Jerusalem and Washington.

I hope PBS or one of the cable channels picks up Ferguson's film and plays it repeatedly over the coming months. If enough people see it, perhaps its title will happily be proved wrong, and we will withdraw from this lost cause. It could also prevent the strike on Iran that Bush and Cheney so clearly want to initiate before they leave office.

* * *

Has anyone ever read a Robert Ludlum novel? Cover to cover? Or even cover to, say, page 50? I found it impossible to get past page 20 of the two novels I've sampled from the countless titles spewed from the Ludlum factory. (Before his death in 2001, Ludlum had reached that enviable apex of American literary endeavor, elevated from an author to a brand. Like his fellow best-sellers—Joseph Patterson, Mary Higgins Clark, Tom Clancy—he had been accorded the enormous benefit of having others write his works for him.)

I mention my ignorance of the Jason Bourne novels by way of full disclosure. I have no idea whether the films based on them follow Ludlum's literary specifications. And, frankly, I don't care. Fare this unreadable doesn't deserve loyal adaptation.

Mr. Bourne is the perfect undercover operative. The CIA has stripped him of his memory, leaving him without a past and nearly without a thought. He's a brutal, reflexive assassination machine.

The first film in the series, *The Bourne Identity*, was refreshingly spare, without James Bond gadgetry other than the homemade devices Bourne made on the run. It also helped that Matt Damon played the title character by freezing his all-American face into the dazed expression of a college freshman stepping onto his school's quad on the first day of classes. Damon seems to have been born to do *tabula rasa*. The plot concerned a CIA handler attempting to have Bourne eliminated for conduct unbecomingly conscience-stricken. He had failed to murder when ordered to. From this moment, the film is a nearly nonstop 90-minute chase across Europe in which Bourne gets to display his superhuman resourcefulness, outwitting and out-pummeling his pursuers. Not a bad evening's entertainment, considering you could always admire the scenic locales when the fisticuffs began to pall.

Unfortunately, the second and third installments do not offer such pleasant travelogue relief. Paul Greengrass took over the directorial duties in *Bourne* 2 and seems to have mistaken his assignment. Perhaps he thought he was doing kitchen detail. He chops both films finely, gathers the bits, and tosses them into a blender. Greengrass used some of this chop-chop, blend-blend style in his very effective *United* 93, but, in his *Bourne* episodes, he leaves the setting on FRAPPÉ. The results are vertiginously hectic and glutinously smeared. Watching *The Bourne Ultimatum* (3), I couldn't tell where I was most of the time, not that it much mattered. Another CIA boss is out to kill Bourne, of course; this time, it's David Strathairn, looking dyspeptically annoyed at Bourne's ability to climb elevator shafts into his impenetrable office and fly cars off the Westside Highway to escape an army of lesser operatives. Finally, Albert Finney shows up playing a sort of grinning Minotaur lurking in the center of the agency's Manhattan labyrinth. In a rumbling voice, this monster reveals to Bourne what the agency did to him. Passing strange, since Bourne had already figured this out in the first film.

In an attempt to be *au courant*, Greengrass has supplied the film with some crass contemporary references. He includes smudged flashbacks to episodes of Bourne undergoing water-boarding and other Abu Ghraib tortures. (I didn't know water-boarding produces amnesia. Perhaps it's a variant of brainwashing.) I'm surprised that a director who, in his earlier work, clearly takes terrorism seriously would put such images to use in a frivolous piece of escapism. And that he would cash in on Hollywood's favorite all-purpose bogeyman. Haven't we had quite enough of the paranoid, out-of-control CIA? After all, we now have George Tenet's dispiriting revelations to read.

* * *

I thought *The Simpsons Movie* would offer some comic relief, and it did—in a mild sort of way. Here is America's favorite dysfunctional family in their full glory, negotiating toxic pollution, governmental quarantine, and Homer's bottomless stupidity. One of the highlights is Bart's nude skateboard ride through Springfield, the Midwest's Everytown. This daylight escapade provides an essay on cinema's resources for shocking us by not showing us what we're looking for—an essay, I should add, that hilariously subverts its thesis in its closing paragraph. (If you have any interest in the film, you would prefer to see this for yourself.)

There is one thing about *The Simpsons* that troubles me. The writers, James Brooks and Matt Groening, lifted their lead character's name, Homer Simpson, from Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust*. West's Homer Simpson, however, is not a beer-swilling dimwit but a nearly catatonic bookkeeper who suffers from a pathological inability to assert himself. The weird joke of West's brilliant novel resides in having Homer come to California, expecting to find the excitement he had watched on movie screens all of his dim life and then, once in seamy Los Angeles, not knowing how to satisfy his desires. By contrast, *The Simpsons*' Homer never leaves a desire unexpressed. If he's feeling it, he's doing it. Is this merely ironic, or are we to infer that, after 50 years, popular culture has wised up the Homer Simpsons of the world? Instead of feeling repressed, they are now heedlessly grabbing pleasure wherever they can. It is an interesting conceit but, perhaps, one meant only for the series' smart-aleck creators. There is little indication that they expect what they perceived to be their marginally literate audience to make the connection to West's work. Perhaps this is why I often find the series a little off-putting. Like all other smart alecks, its creators can seem insufferably parochial. It would appear that, for them, America's only intelligent life forms inhabit either Los Angeles or New York City. All others, especially Midwesterners, exist as do specimens in a zoo. They have but one purpose: to amuse the big-city cognoscenti. Time to open the cages for a real laugh. c

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Villa Blanco, Villa Negro

Revealed in the headlights of the van, Las Palomas had never looked so depressing to Héctor as it did that night. Indeed, it appeared to him as positively sinister, a ghost town in which the few flesh-and-blood inhabitants were the apparitions, and the thronging specters from the past, the true living beings. It occurred to him, in that instant, to make a U-turn in the potholed street and make a run back across the border for home. Instead, he drove on to the Pink House and parked directly beneath the Elks sign. Jacinta Ruiz, after all, was no one to be afraid of. And Héctor felt himself in greater need of a drink than he could remember ever feeling. Thank the Lord, he thought, Jesús "Eddie" wasn't along this evening to share it with him.

The Pink House, which by day appeared merely startling, at night was hideous to behold in its resemblance to a demon bordello incongruously surrounded by ancient, parti-colored pickup trucks reassembled from the junkyards of northern Mexico. Héctor locked the van, having taken care to leave nothing of value in view on the front seat, and entered the place, brushing past the Tarahumara woman who waited just behind the door with her hand extended, palm up. He passed round the end of the service counter that had once served as the bar and went on to the dining room, where eight or ten *paisanos* in tight jeans, new cowboy boots, and filthy quilted vests drank beer and smoked cigarettes as they watched the wide-screen TV. There was no sign of Jacinta Ruiz. Héctor sat at a table as far away from the Mexicans as he could get and pretended to devote his attention to the TV, where a soccer game was being broadcast from Venezuela. Héctor, though an aficionado, violently disapproved of Venezuela's president, who only recently had denounced President Bush as the devil from the rostrum of the U.N. General Assembly in New York. Therefore, he did his best to ignore the game, sitting with a vacant expression as he waited for Jacinta to show herself. Through the door on the far side of the room, he could look into the store, with its arrangement of gaudy pottery and the ceramic bowl sinks that were so popular these days (AveMaría was keen to have one installed in the house in Belen), where he'd bought the Pancho Villa statue. Héctor wished now he'd brought the statue along with him in order to return it, assuming Jacinta Ruiz would agree to take the damn thing back.

"*¡Buenas noches*, Héctor! *¿Como esta?*"

He turned from the TV where the Venezuelan team had just scored a goal on the Mexican one and saw Jacinta, holding a tray laden with a half-dozen dripping longneck bottles and smiling at him.

"Can you not watch the game at home on American TV?" Jacinta asked. "And where is your *compañero* this evening? Without Jesús, I almost did not recognize you—sitting alone like this!"

She passed behind him to the *paisanos*' tables and placed the bottles, one after the other, before the disgruntled men. "*¡Chinga los Venezuelanos!*" one of them urged vehemently through his drooping mustaches. Héctor observed they were not placing bets, no doubt because nobody was willing to make a wager against the Mexican team. He noted also that Jacinta took care to collect all the money owed her on the latest round.

"And what can I do for you tonight, *mi querido*?" she asked, setting a pink cocktail napkin down before him on the table.

Her low, solicitous voice was soothing to Héctor—better even than drink, it seemed to him. However, he'd driven all this way, and it didn't seem polite not to order anything.

"I'll take a Corona," Héctor said, "and a cup of menudo." He hadn't intended to order food, having finished supper a couple hours before. Perhaps it was the homey, almost intimate, atmosphere of the Pink House that provoked his hunger.

His cellphone went off while he was waiting for the soup to come from the kitchen. He answered it and found himself speaking with AveMaría.

"*¡Oiga! ¡Oiga!* Héctor, it is your wife calling! Please tell your son he must go to bed, otherwise you will give him a good licking when you get home!"

"What's he doing now?"

"Watching Animal Planet. There's a two-hour special about lions in Africa. It isn't suitable for a kid Dubya's age, anyway—how the lions eat their cubs so the lionesses can go into heat right away and get pregnant again. Also all the natives are Islamists, apparently."

"Tell him to turn the TV off and get into bed—pronto."

"I turned it off already, can't you hear? That's what all the yelling going on in the background's about."

Jacinta Ruiz placed the soup cup before him and withdrew tactfully.

"Well, put the kid on and I'll give him what-for."

When he'd delivered the virtual thrashing over the telephone, Héctor discovered he was in need of another beer. Jacinta brought it and sat down across the table from him, from where she had a view both of the *paisanos* and of the entrance door at the opposite end of the room. At this time of year, the tourists were few, after dark especially, while the drinking population of Las Palomas seemed to have settled in for the night at one or another of the several watering holes. The time, it seemed to Héctor, was ripe for the conversation he'd come for, if only he could find a means of initiating it. He hadn't felt so tongue-tied and awkward since the occasion of his first date with a girl named María-Brígida, more years ago than he cared to think of, in Namiquipa.

"So what did your wife have to say when you brought home that hideous statue the other day?" Jacinta wanted to know.

Héctor, in his delighted astonishment, wanted to kiss the girl. (It had not gone this way with María-Brígida, who, so far from cooperating with his conversational—and other—plans, had begun the evening by mentioning she'd never kissed a boy without going to Confession after-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ward.) Speechless with gratitude, he was unable to answer immediately, except to utter a few babbling disconnected syllables.

"She—she hasn't seen it yet," he confessed at last. "I hid it away in my office in order to . . . think about it for a little while."

"Oh?" Jacinta Ruiz sounded puzzled.

"Yes . . . You see, I have always regarded Pancho Villa as a great—a very great man. He is my hero, from whom indeed I am descended. You should know, I am a member of Los Hijos de Pancho Villa in Namiquipa," he added proudly.

"*¿Verdad?*" Jacinta appeared more amused than otherwise.

"*¡Si!* In fact, I am Keeper of the Doors. All my life, I have heard nothing but good spoken of General Villa—except from Americans, of course. But the other day, I heard from you a different story."

Jacinta Ruiz frowned and stared at the tabletop.

"It is true, I do not admire the man—in fact, I hate and despise him!"

"But why? You are, after all, Méxicana!"

"And you," she said, smiling, "are Americano—are you not? It seems to me we have had this conversation before."

Héctor, in his confusion, did not answer her at once.

"I—I am Méxicano-Americano, of course." Or was it Americano-Méxicano? It had seemed all that was settled in his mind, once and forever, twenty years ago. Now, he realized he did not know what to think.

"Whether you are Mexican or American," Jacinta told him, "the bandit Villa fought and killed your people—Mexicans and Americans both—on either side of the border. He was a thief and a murderer, not a revolutionary or a soldier at all. I suppose you have read about Villa at Juárez, Villa at Celaya, Villa at Parral, Villa in Mexico City—Villa at Columbus. I mentioned to you, not long ago, the business of Maude Wright and her husband. But are you acquainted with the story of Villa and the McKinney Ranch—this side of the border, only a few miles from here?"

Héctor was. Unfortunately, the event was less pretty even than the incident involving the Wrights, which indeed had taken place only the day before. Villa and his army of 399 soldiers were encamped within striking distance of Columbus, which they attacked the following night. That morning, Villa was sitting cross-legged beside his campfire drinking coffee when three horsebackers appeared on a rise several hundred yards away. One of the riders waved in recognition, and then all three put their horses forward at a trot toward the camp. They were Arthur McKinney of the Palomas Land and Cattle Company, an old acquaintance, and two of his ranch hands. While the cowboys sat their horses to watch from a distance, McKinney approached the fire and inquired of the General how the revolution was going. Villa assured him it went very well and ordered one of his men to serve Señor McKinney a cup of coffee. The two men chatted casually together for several minutes. At last, Villa remarked in a friendly manner, "You know, Arturo, I'm making war against the gringos, too, and I guess I'll just start right here with you." Quick as greased lightning, a Villista threw a loop of barbed wire around McKinney's neck. The rancher, ready to take a joke, was in the middle of an appreciative laugh when suddenly his eyes bugged out and his tongue protruded. A second Villista tossed the other end of the wire over a cottonwood branch and jerked the rancher off the ground, above the tin cup rolling in the dust. Seeing their boss suspended in midair, the cowboys took a deep seat and spurred their horses to a run. Before they'd covered a hundred yards, Villa's men roped them from their saddles and dragged them to death behind their own horses. While the incident was hardly among the most lurid episodes in the great man's career—compared, for instance, with his shooting of ninety Carrancista "bitches" at Torreón in November 1916—Héctor found it distinctly embarrassing nevertheless in the context of his conversation with Jacinta Ruiz.

"Yes," he agreed in a constrained voice, "I know about . . . all that."

"To read of such things in books is not the same as hearing about them from one's own family. Mathilde Saenz—my grandmother—was a friend of the McKinneys, as well as the Wrights. Everyone was friends with everyone in the border country in those days, Méxicanos and Americanos alike—even the Indians, some of them. *¿Y por qué no?* We were all neighbors, living in a hostile land, reliant upon one another for help and cooperation. But where is the monument to that, I want to know? Instead, there is Pancho Villa State Park—demanded by Mexicans in Palomas and Columbus, paid for by the Americans in Santa Fe! *¡Santa María!* Whenever I drive by that *maldito signo*, I want to get out of the car and chop it down!"

Jacinta Ruiz's black eyes sparked, her scarlet upper lip curled as she spoke, and her shapely body went rigid with contempt and defiance. She looked very proud—and also, Héctor could not help noticing, very beautiful. He tried assuring himself he'd never recognized her beauty before—and shrank in shame from this attempt at the grossest self-deception.

"I must see to my tables," Jacinta said abruptly, rising from her chair and smoothing her skirt behind her. "Do you, too, desire more beer?"

"No thanks," Héctor said quickly. "I need to be getting on home now, before my wife becomes worried for me."

Her knowing, wholly sympathetic, smile confounded him.

"When Jesús returns from Belen," Jacinta Ruiz assured him, "she will not be so worried, and then you can sit late with me again. *Buenas noches*, Héctor."

Twenty-five miles up the highway, in another country, AveMaría, FOX News, and bed awaited him. Héctor paid his tab, put a generous tip down beside it, and went out into the shadowed streets of Las Palomas, where it seemed to him he could hear, after 90 years, the echo of battle just across the border, where one half of the still undreamed-of Héctor had fought the other half with rifle, sword, and case knife, in the predawn darkness splashed by the gutter and smoke of blazing pitch-pine torches brandished aloft.

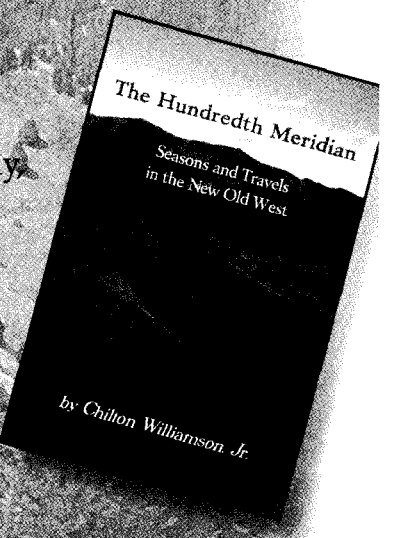
To Subscribe:
call (800) 877-5459 or visit
www.ChroniclesMagazine.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Hundredth Meridian

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Seasons and Travels in the New Old West



What the Old West had that the New West increasingly lacks are, finally, reality and dignity—the reality of what is basic to human experience, the dignity that comes from acceptance of the physical trials, dangers, hardships, and experience which accompany that reality.

—From the Foreword

Praise for earlier work by Chilton Williamson, Jr.:

"Williamson proves himself a stylish writer with a deft touch in creating three-dimensional characters, and in bringing the bleak beauty of the Wyoming outback to vivid life."—Don Campbell, *Los Angeles Times*

"A novel of wit, intelligence, and high style, enriched with many fresh observations of the eroding American West."—Edward Abbey on *Desert Light*

The Hundredth Meridian Order Form (please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery)

Softcover Price $22.95
($19.95 + $3.00 shipping and handling each)

X Quantity _____

Total _____

Please mail form (with payment) to:
Chronicles/Products
P.O. Box 800, Mount Morris, IL 61054

or, to order toll-free,
call 1-800-397-8160

HUND

HUND

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

☐ Check or money order enclosed

☐ Please bill my: ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ Amex ☐ Discover

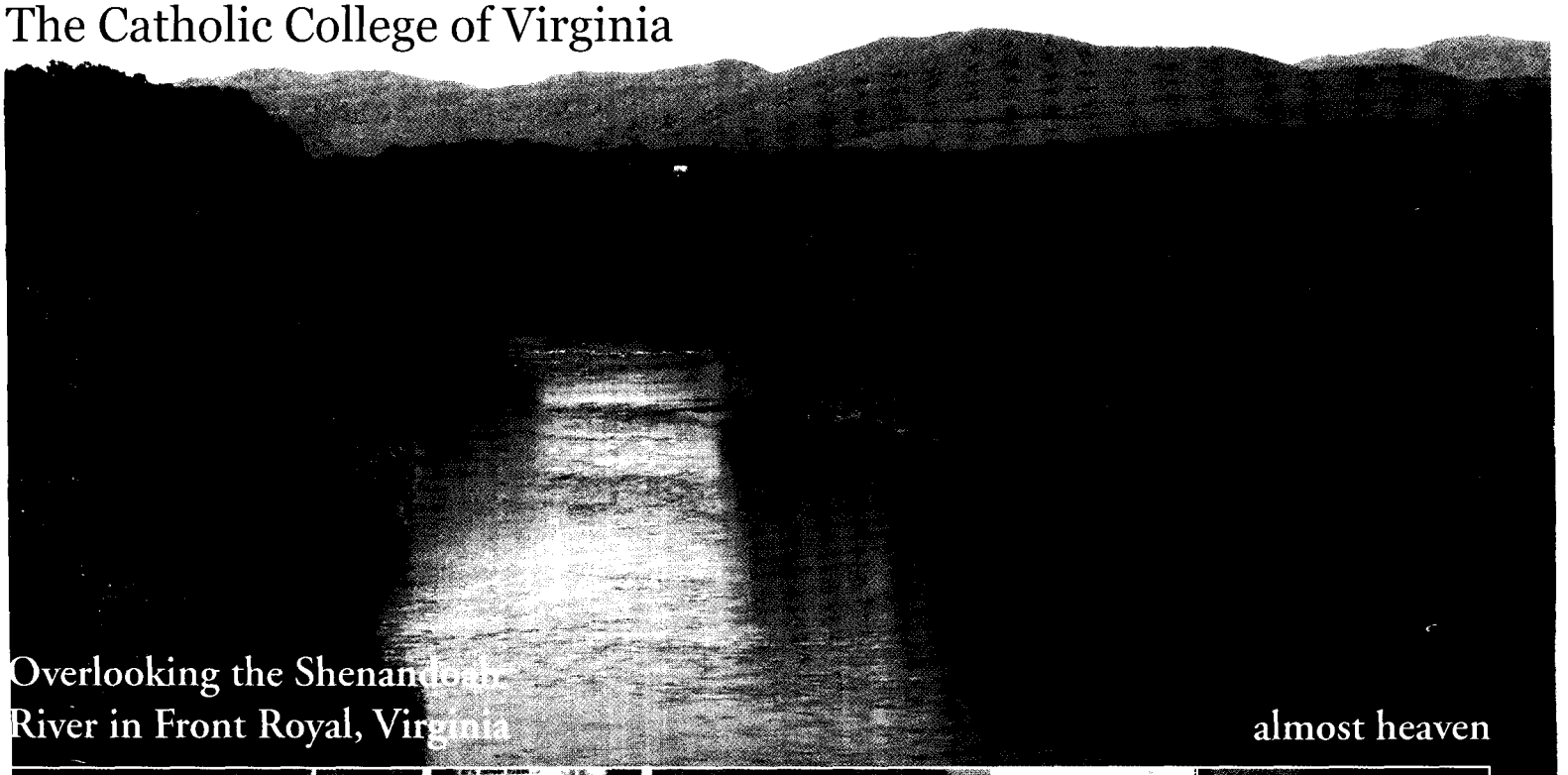
Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHRISTENDOM

The Catholic College of Virginia



National Reputation ❖ International Flavor ❖ Universal Mission

- ❖Top 50 All-American Colleges-Intercollegiate Studies nstitute
- ❖ Top College for American Values-Newsmax.com
- ❖ Top Conservative College-Young America's oundation
- ❖ Barron's *Best Buys in College Education*
- ❖ Peterson's *Competitive Colleges*
- ❖ Peterson's *440 Colleges for Top Students*
- ❖ US News & World Report's *America's Best Colleges*
- ❖ Endorsed by Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ), Sen. Sam Brownback (R-KS), Alan Keyes, Pat Buchanan, Kate O'Beirne, Jim Nicholson, and many others

Whether it's the majestic beauty of the surrounding Blue Ridge Mountains and Shenandoah River, the vivid reminders of our Catholic heritage, or the joyfulness of our students, there's no better place to experience a truly Catholic liberal arts education.

Apply Online Today. It's Free!

CHRISTENDOM COLLEGE
Almost Heaven
Front Royal, Virginia
800.877.5456 - www.christendom.edu

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea with rings?"

Join Chronicles *editor* ***Thomas Fleming*** *and Rockford Institute executive vice president* ***Christopher Check*** *in*

Venice, Ravenna, and Padua

Gates to the East

March 27-April 5, 2008

RON UNZ
555 BRYANT ST # 371
PALO ALTO CA 94301-1704

Robert Browning is only one of a long list of great writers—from Shakespeare, Wordsworth, and Byron to Henry James, Thomas Mann, and Ernest Hemingway—who fell in love with Venice. Who wouldn't go to Venice, if he had a chance to go in the company of congenial souls and to learn something about the amazing republic that challenged kingdoms and empires (while making a profit) and stood in the path of the Ottoman Turk? William McNeill called Venice "the hinge of Europe" because it was Venice, and before Venice, Ravenna, that connected Europe with the vital culture of the Byzantine Empire, a culture manifested in the domes and spires of San Marco and Ravenna's exquisite mosaics (Italy's finest).

N.B. All prices increase $300.00 after December 15, 2007. Registration is limited. Previous events have sold out. Registration fees are based on current exchange rates; the Institute reserves the right to assess a fee, should rates change significantly at the dollar's expense.

For more information, or to register, contact Christopher Check at (815) 964-5811.

The price for the Convivium includes:

Four-star lodging
—Ravenna's Hotel Bisanzio (four nights)
—Padua's Hotel Plaza (five nights)

Six group dinners

Guided walks
to churches and historic archeological sites

All receptions and lectures

Deluxe motor-coach transfer
from Ravenna to Padua on March 31

Two guided day trips to Venice

Certain admission fees
to historic sites and museums

Singles: $2,695.00
Couples: $4,495.00

Ample free time for private exploration and shopping!

www.rockfordinstitute.org/events

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED